



**UCLA Center for Healthier  
Children, Families and  
Communities**

**Funded by  
The California Children and  
Families Commission**

**Developed under contract  
#CCFC-6845**

**December 2001**

# **County Commissions' Perspectives on School Readiness and Technical Assistance Needs**

## **Special Feature:**

***Four Counties Share Lessons Learned and Keys to  
Success in Implementing their School Readiness  
Programs***

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## **Acknowledgements:**

The UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities would like to thank all representatives from local County Commissions who volunteered their time and effort in the preparation of this report.

We wish to thank the following people for their thoughtful review and valuable suggestions on earlier drafts of this report:

Stephen Kaplan, Consultant, Ventura County Children and Families Commission

Emily Nahat, California Children and Families Commission

Roberta Peck, California Children and Families Commission

Carol Sutherland, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities

We also wish to thank Aaron Nayfack, Allison DeMarco, and Miranda Guardiani who provided invaluable support in the preparation of this document.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earlier this year, the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) proposed the School Readiness Initiative, a statewide effort focused on helping all of California's children enter school ready to learn. To assess counties' awareness of and reaction to School Readiness as an organizing element for Prop 10 efforts, the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities conducted interviews with Executive Directors of County Children and Families Commissions (CoCFCs) across California. Fifty-two of the 58 Prop 10 Commissions agreed to participate in telephone interviews that were conducted between **June and August 2001**; when possible, commissioners also participated. The study yielded the following key findings:

### **COUNTIES' AWARENESS OF AND RESPONSES TO THE SCHOOL READINESS INITIATIVE**

- All County Commissions are aware of CCFC's focus on School Readiness.
- While CoCFCs view the School Readiness Initiative as a promising opportunity to serve young children, they express concerns about: the definition of school readiness; program eligibility criteria; and the importance of implementing the initiative in a developmentally appropriate manner. CoCFCs also indicate that they consider the ability to develop School Readiness efforts at the local level to be a top priority.
- Local Commissions also view the School Readiness Initiative as a vehicle for improving schools.

### **SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES**

- Although CoCFCs have embraced the School Readiness Initiative, they are not necessarily utilizing the term to describe their efforts.
- Although most counties have not developed a School Readiness model, nearly three quarters are funding School Readiness activities. Commonly provided School Readiness activities include: home visitations; child care; preschool; and early literacy programs.

### **CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL READINESS INITIATIVE**

- Executive Directors consistently cite funding as one of the challenges associated with implementing a School Readiness initiative. They also indicate that engaging the K-12 educational system poses difficulties.

### **SCHOOL READINESS COLLABORATIVES**

- Prior to CCFC's announcement of the Initiative, collaboratives focused on School Readiness were operating in 77% of the counties that were interviewed.
- CoCFCs identify four major challenges to establishing and maintaining collaboratives focused on School Readiness: insufficient funding; difficulties establishing leadership; limited success with engaging school districts; and county geography.
- CoCFCs identify functioning collaboratives and partnerships with Healthy Start sites as resources from which they can draw in implementing a School Readiness initiative.

### **RURAL COUNTY TRENDS**

- Rural counties are more likely than urban areas to report the existence of an established collaborative focused on School Readiness
- Rural counties express greater concern about the applicability of center-based models.
- Transportation and geographic isolation are important needs in rural areas.

### **COUNTIES' TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS**

- CoCFCs identify the following topics as their top five choices for obtaining technical assistance regarding the School Readiness Initiative: long-term sustainability models; finance tools; schools' readiness for children; best practice models; and evaluation methods.

In sum, it appears that county Prop 10 Commissions across California are well aware of the State's School Readiness Initiative. While counties are at various stages of the developmental process, they are beginning to plan for and implement School Readiness services. Although a sizeable percentage of Executive Directors articulate concerns about aspects of the initiative, interview responses suggest that CoCFCs are generally supportive of the concept and that the initiative is generating enthusiasm in many counties across California.

## INTRODUCTION

In an effort to help all of California's children enter school ready to learn, Governor Davis established a School Readiness Task Force in January 2001. The Task Force collaborated with the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) and members of the School Readiness Advisory Group-comprised of representatives from County Commissions (CoCFC), State agencies, and community partners- to develop a comprehensive initiative to promote School Readiness.

These collaborative efforts resulted in a multi-faceted approach to School Readiness that proposes to engage families, communities, and educators in the important work of preparing children for school. Adopting the definition of School Readiness developed by the National Education Goals Panel, the State Commission outlines five coordinated elements of school readiness: (1) Early Care and Education; (2) Parenting and Family Support; (3) Health and Social Services; (4) School Capacity/Readiness; and (5) Site Infrastructure, Administration, and Evaluation.

In July, CCFC allocated \$200 million, over a four-year period, to operate research-based School Readiness Centers/Programs in communities in which there are low-performing schools. These programs serve to link various early care and other health and social service providers with school sites for the purpose of (1) improving the transition from early care settings to elementary school, and (2) increasing the capacity of schools and communities to serve young children and promote their success in school.

The State will phase-in the initiative over a period of several months, with Phase I sites set to begin operation from December 2001 through March 2002. Phase II and III programs are scheduled to participate in a more lengthy development process, and may apply up to June 2003. Program eligibility is based on school performance, as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API). Communities in which schools are in deciles 1-3 on the API are eligible to participate.

In supporting the efforts of the 58 counties across California, the California Children and Families Commission will be in a position to support and provide technical assistance that is both responsive to the needs of individual counties, and strategic in supporting the broader outcome goals and policy objectives of the initiative. Analysis of county activities and the identification of common themes across California's diverse counties can provide a basis for strategic technical assistance that addresses the macro level issues affecting many counties, irrespective of size, location, and geography. Similarly, a detailed understanding of activities at the local level can facilitate the provision of assistance that is informed by and responsive to the particular needs of these diverse counties.

To both inform and build capacity for assistance of this nature, the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities conducted an assessment of counties' awareness, understanding, and initial perceptions of the School Readiness Initiative. The

assessment yielded important information regarding local interest in and capacity for implementing such an initiative. The results of this assessment are presented in three separate sections.

Section I provides an overview of counties' knowledge of and reaction to School Readiness as an organizing element for Prop 10 efforts. Common findings and key points are presented as well as a description of geographical differences between urban and rural counties. This section includes a series of policy recommendations for promoting the concept of School Readiness across California. Section I concludes with information regarding counties' reported technical assistance needs. Tables are presented to provide a clear picture of both the content of technical assistance that is needed as well as counties' preferred mechanisms for receiving that support.

Section II offers a profile of each county's activities in the area of School Readiness. County data is presented along with a brief summary of responses to the interview questions. These profiles are a simple method for quickly referencing information about the status of School Readiness in specific counties.

Section III reports on the key findings of site visits that were conducted in select counties across California. CHCFC staff visited Orange, Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Yuba Counties.

## METHODOLOGY

The Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities (CHCFC) and the California Children and Families Commission developed targets for information to be obtained. They then collaborated to design questions that would investigate these targeted areas. As a final preparatory measure, CHCFC staff tailored these questions to accommodate an interview setting (See Appendix A).

The design of the interview questionnaire and the scheduling of the interviews occurred concurrently. CHCFC initially contacted all CoCFCs to explain the purpose and goal of the interviews and to request their participation. Following this introduction, e-mails were sent to all of the Executive Directors for scheduling purposes. Staff established and finalized interview dates by e-mail and telephone; interviews with the 52 of the 58 CoCFCs who agreed to participate took place over a ten-week period between June and August 2001.

All interviews were conducted with County Prop 10 Executive Directors via conference calls. CHCFC staff forwarded a copy of the interview questions to Executive Directors in advance so that they could collect any necessary data prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted by one senior staff member at CHCFC and two research associates, with the senior staff member asking the questions, and the research associates transcribing the responses. In some of the counties, one or more of the County

Commissioners also participated in the interview. The number of participating Commissioners ranged from zero in some locales, to as many as 5 in others.

Upon completion of the interviews, CHCFC staff reviewed the interview transcripts to identify major themes that emerged from counties' responses. After the review, staff elaborated on these themes to develop Section I of this report. It is important to note that the data presented in this report essentially provides an assessment of perspectives, developments, and activities regarding School Readiness at a particular point in time. Some of the issues and concerns that are raised in the report are being addressed in the course of publicizing and implementing the initiative.

Based on the transcribed interview responses, brief profiles were created of the current School Readiness activities of every participating county (See Section II). Executive Directors were given an opportunity to review and approve these profiles prior to their publication. Interview data was also used to compile tables that demonstrate counties' preferences in regard to obtaining technical assistance. Finally, CHCFC utilized interview responses to identify counties in which to conduct potential site visits.



## SECTION I: INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The following section presents the major findings of interviews with fifty-two Prop 10 Executive Directors and a limited number of County Commissioners. Interviewees were asked a series of questions to gauge CoCFCs awareness, understanding, and initial perceptions of the School Readiness Initiative. Interview questions were designed to provide information ranging from counties' initial responses to the School Readiness Initiative to more detailed information regarding the status of local School Readiness efforts. Interview responses are reported below in the context of the following topics:

- counties' responses to School Readiness as a focus for Prop 10;
- the status of School Readiness in counties' current strategic plans;
- collaboration and leadership regarding School Readiness;
- challenges associated with implementing the initiative;
- existing areas of strength and need at the county level; and
- diversity in interview responses based on county's geographical differences.

This interview data was utilized to develop a set of policy recommendations for advancing the concept of School Readiness statewide. The section concludes with a set of tables that present CoCFCs' preferred topics for technical assistance.

### COUNTY RESPONSES TO SCHOOL READINESS AND THE CCFC CONCEPT PAPER

#### Awareness of and response to School Readiness

Interview responses suggest that Executive Directors are very familiar with the CCFC focus on School Readiness. Of the 52 individuals that were interviewed, all report that they are "aware of" the new emphasis on School Readiness as a central organizing element for the initiative.

Key themes emerged among Executive Directors' reactions to School Readiness. In general, Executive Directors and participating County Commissioners responded positively to the Commission's focus on School Readiness. Numerous counties indicate that they are already funding School Readiness related types of programs. In some counties, the availability of new funds is stimulating support for the concept.

Interview responses indicate that some counties see School Readiness as a potential vehicle for facilitating improved communication between the various professionals that

#### **? KEY FINDING:**

*All County Commissions are aware of CCFC's focus on School Readiness.*

serve children and families. A number of counties also see School Readiness as a mechanism to foster increased collaboration between early educators and elementary school personnel.

Though Executive Directors report that they are supportive of the concept, 27 of the 52 respondents (52%) articulate various concerns regarding the philosophical and logistical

implications of a School Readiness Initiative. These concerns fall into four general categories:

- *Defining School Readiness:* Interview responses indicate that counties desire a common working definition of School Readiness. Of the 28 counties that raised concerns, nearly half, 46%, have questions regarding the elements and parameters of School Readiness. Interviewees expressed a need to operationalize School Readiness so that counties will have a common framework from which to proceed.
- *The developmental appropriateness of the initiative:* Numerous counties expressed reservations about what they view as the initiative's perceived focus on "academics." Overall, 21% (of the counties that report concerns) fear that a focus on academic preparation, developing a larger knowledge base and improved cognitive skills, would be emphasized to the detriment of social and emotional development. While community eligibility is based on schools' API scores, local implementation will define the degree to which there is a balanced emphasis on cognitive social and physical development.
- *Eligibility criteria:* Thirty-two percent of the Executive Directors with concerns indicate that some of their communities are ineligible for funding based on their API scores. Representatives from these counties assert that the eligibility criteria have the potential to penalize schools that raise or maintain good test scores.
- *Maintenance of local autonomy:* While counties support the concept of School Readiness in an operational way, they raise concerns about the role of the CCFC in identifying a statewide focus for Prop 10. Thirty-nine percent of the counties with concerns express a very strong interest in maintaining the ability to identify priorities and allocate resources based on local community needs. CCFC addressed this concern in the School Readiness Initiative's RFF which is designed to be maximally responsive to local needs, resources, and priorities.

#### ? KEY FINDING:

*While CoCFCs view the School Readiness Initiative as a promising opportunity to serve young children, they express concerns about:*  
 ? The definition of school readiness;  
 ? The developmental appropriateness of the initiative;  
 ? Eligibility criteria; and  
 ? Their ability to maintain control of local activities.

#### **Response to the CCFC School Readiness Concept Paper**

The vast majority of Executive Directors, 87%, indicate that they and the members of their Commission have read the School Readiness concept paper. In those counties in which the Commissioners have not read the paper, Executive Directors report that the Commissions have scheduled a time to review the document as a group. Interviewees

**? KEY FINDING:**

*The CCFC School Readiness Concept Paper was generally well received by CoCFCs.*

report that the paper was very well received by the counties. For some, it helped to further define School Readiness. Several Executive Directors indicate that the document provides a good summary of the criteria and the basic elements of the concept.

Some Executive Directors, however, view aspects of the document as problematic. Individuals echoed the concerns raised in the previous section regarding: the need to more clearly define School Readiness; the perceived academic focus of the initiative; eligibility criteria; and respect for local autonomy. In addition, a few counties indicate that they would prefer to develop a more holistic, family-focused intervention, and saw what was proposed as potentially at odds with that framework. Finally, a few counties reported feeling “overwhelmed” by the scope of the initiative.

## SCHOOL READINESS AND COUNTY STRATEGIC PLANS

Interview responses indicate that all county strategic plans address the concept of School Readiness. However, counties vary significantly in the degree to which their strategic plans emphasize School Readiness as a priority. Moreover, discussions with several county representatives reveal that although many counties have embraced the School Readiness Initiative, many are not utilizing the term “School Readiness” to describe their efforts.

### Identification of Models

Seventy-seven percent of the Executive Directors report that they have not developed a “School Readiness” model for service delivery. Many of these counties report that they are currently in the process of developing one; until now, they simply have not had enough time to identify and evaluate the merits and applicability of various models. However, a small proportion of these counties assert that they do not anticipate developing a model for School Readiness. Their reservations about adopting a model are based on the conviction that community needs and opinions should drive the design of available services. These directors envision a series of community-developed initiatives within their counties that reflect the needs and desires of the particular communities.

**? KEY FINDING:**

*Although CoCFCs have embraced the School Readiness Initiative, they are not necessarily utilizing the term to describe their efforts.*

**? KEY FINDING:**

*Although most counties have not developed a School Readiness model, nearly three quarters are funding School Readiness activities.*

Executive Directors in the remaining 23% of counties have already identified a model for their School Readiness efforts. Although the counties are very diverse in their selections, many of the proposed models seem to build on the Family Resource Center

(FRC) model. Numerous counties report that they have selected a model that resembles a FRC and includes the provision of an array of integrated services for children and families.

### **Current School Readiness Activities**

While the majority of counties have not identified a model for “School Readiness,” 73% indicate that they are currently funding individual School Readiness activities. Services that counties commonly provide include: health services; home visitations; child care; preschool; and early literacy programs. Several other counties report that although they have identified School Readiness as a priority, they are not currently funding work in this area.

Many of the Executive Directors who spoke about School Readiness and the services they were in the process of developing and launching, emphasized specific and individual service programs. This raises the issue of how Executive Directors view School Readiness and whether they will be challenged to move from a view of promoting School Readiness that is about increasing the range of different services available to families, to a vision that is more holistic, integrated, and comprehensive.

#### **? KEY FINDING:**

*Commonly provided School Readiness activities include:*

- ? Home visitations
- ? Early Care and Education
- ? Health Services
- ? Early literacy programs

### **School Readiness-effects on county level strategic plans**

The majority of Executive Directors interviewed, 76%, indicate that the CCFC's identification of School Readiness as an overarching goal has not changed the priority of School Readiness in their counties' current strategic plans. This response is apparently a function of the following factors:

- *School Readiness as an existing focus:* Approximately half of the counties that report that they have not revised their strategic plans indicate that the CCFC's focus did not require a shift in priorities. These counties report that they have already identified School Readiness as a top concern and embarked on the types of planning and activities outlined in the concept paper.
- *Scheduling and commitments to prior projects:* Among the remaining fifty percent of counties, general scheduling and logistical challenges interfered with Commissions' abilities to revise their strategic plans. They expressed a desire to review their plans and make necessary changes in the near future. Some of these counties express concern about the Commission's timing in identifying School Readiness

#### **? KEY FINDING:**

*As of the time of interviews, most counties (76%) had not revised their strategic plans to reflect CCFC's focus on School Readiness. Counties indicate that their plans already addressed the concept, or that their Commissions had already committed resources to other projects.*

as a priority. They explain that they are in the process of completing their first year of funding and that they do not want to abandon programs in which they have already invested resources. It is important to note, however, that most of these counties anticipate revising their strategic plans to reflect a stronger emphasis on School Readiness in the coming year.

## COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

Forty of the fifty-two Prop 10 Executive Directors interviewed report that pre-existing collaboratives focused on School Readiness are already operating in their communities. Interviews reveal that most of these collaboratives were created prior to the passage of Prop 10. Several counties report that many of these existing collaboratives only indirectly address School Readiness, as they were not specifically designed for this purpose. However, irrespective of their original intent, all functioning collaboratives are examining methods to incorporate or maintain School Readiness projects in their communities.

### ? KEY FINDING:

*Prior to CCFC's announcement of the Initiative, collaboratives focused on School Readiness were operating in 77% of the counties that were interviewed.*

The most commonly reported collaborating agencies include the following (in descending order):

- School Districts and County Offices of Education
- County Health and Human Services
- Local Childcare Planning Council
- Head Start
- Healthy Start
- Private childcare centers
- Community-based organizations

Although existing collaboratives are reportedly very successful in achieving their goals, various obstacles were also reported that could potentially threaten the success of the School Readiness Initiative. Following are four of the most frequently cited challenges to establishing and maintaining collaboratives:

- *Funding:* Executive Directors indicate that in many instances there are insufficient resources to sustain these collaborative groups, suggesting that sustainability is a salient issue for many counties.
- *Leadership:* Establishing appropriate leadership for the collaboratives and attempting to find compromise among divergent opinions and agendas were also listed as challenges to working effectively.

### ? KEY FINDING:

*CoCFCs identify four major challenges to establishing and maintaining collaboratives focused on School Readiness:*

*? Insufficient funding;  
? Difficulties establishing leadership;  
? Limited success with engaging school districts; and  
? County geography.*

- *Engaging school districts:* Many counties expressed difficulty with achieving buy-in from school administrators. Executive Directors indicate that it is particularly challenging to engage school superintendents and principals in School Readiness efforts. Interviewees speculate that school personnel may not possess adequate information about the School Readiness Initiative.
- *County geography:* Geography poses a major problem for some counties when establishing collaboratives. Because many counties cover large areas, some Executive Directors suggest that at times it may be more useful to have “neighborhood” collaboratives rather than a single collaborative that is responsible for the entire county. For certain issues, however, regional collaboratives that encompass several counties may be more effective.

### SPECIAL CHALLENGES: FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Executive Directors were asked to identify any challenges associated with implementing a School Readiness Initiative in their counties. While some clear trends emerged, interview responses indicate the presence of a widely varied group of potential challenges. Executive Directors' responses suggest that the challenges confronting local Commissions are, in large part, based on counties' unique social and geographical characteristics. Following are the challenges that Executive Directors cited most frequently: funding (42%); engaging the K-12 school system (12%); transportation (10%); isolation/proximity to potential clients in rural counties (8%); defining the scope of the School Readiness Initiative (8%); establishing a focus for the initiative when there are numerous low-performing schools in a county (8%); and recruitment and retention of early care and education providers (6%).

#### ? KEY FINDING:

*Executive Directors consistently cite funding as one of the challenges associated with implementing a School Readiness initiative.*

It is important to note the consistency with which Executive Directors' cite funding as a challenge to School Readiness efforts; forty-two percent of interviewees indicate that funding related issues pose difficulties for program implementation. They report that limited resources and difficulty in accessing resources present obstacles to providing and maintaining services.

Interview responses also indicate that issues of funding and sustainability may indirectly affect the development of collaboratives. As one Executive Director explained, “Any time you work with K-12, they are wary of new programs and funding that is going to be one time and go away. [We] needed to work to build a partnership.” The ramifications of this finding are significant, as the formation of successful collaboratives is critical to facilitating program improvement and systems change.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND NEEDS

Executive Directors were asked to identify the potential opportunities and challenges associated with implementing the School Readiness Initiative. Analysis of interview responses reveals that these opportunities and challenges are diverse and specific to the needs of each community. In general, Executive Directors view Prop 10 as the catalyst for bringing agencies together in a collaborative effort around School Readiness. Respondents suggest that the joining of community providers in education, health, childcare, and family resources will play an important role in the success of the proposed School Readiness efforts. This was especially true of rural communities where the pooling of resources is so critically important.

In addition to having the support of a successful collaborative, Executive Directors also consistently report the creation of partnerships with local Healthy Start programs and the promotion of linkages between school districts and Prop 10 as useful. A number of counties have used their preexisting early childhood development programs as mechanisms for establishing School Readiness Initiatives. Moreover, many counties have enlisted the support and expertise of local children's service agencies, including the Local Childcare Planning Council.

### ? KEY FINDING:

*CoCFCs identify functioning collaboratives and partnerships with Healthy Start sites as resources from which they can draw in implementing a School Readiness initiative.*

*Local Commissions also view the School Readiness Initiative as a vehicle for improving schools.*

In determining its focus, the initiative has targeted communities with low performing schools in counties across California. CoCFCs look to the State's School Readiness Initiative as a vehicle for improving schools. However, some school districts have also been reluctant to take part in School Readiness activities, and may remain reluctant due to other pressing and competing demands. It has, therefore, been difficult for some counties to forge alliances with schools to provide meaningful services for families.

Counties have also identified community needs that reinforce the importance of a School Readiness focus. Limited English proficiency was the most frequently reported need across the state. Counties throughout California have seen a shift in their demographic make-up; numerous counties report that significant portions of their residents are native Spanish speakers. To make a lasting and significant impact on the community, each county must be responsive to the unique needs that accompany these demographic changes. Therefore, as the new initiative gets under way, it is imperative that projects are multi-lingual and multi-cultural.

**? KEY FINDING:**

*CoCFCs identify poverty and the large number of English Language Learners as their primary areas of need.*

Executive Directors report that child and family poverty is another major need that their counties face. Many of the interviewees indicate that at least 50% of families in their counties receive free or reduced lunch. By improving access to services such as childcare, health care, and social services, aspects of the Initiative can serve to moderate poverty's negative effects on the families served. Furthermore, through the development of broad-

based collaboratives that include individuals and agencies that promote economic and employment development, the School Readiness initiative can facilitate attention to broader social issues.

### RURAL COUNTY TRENDS

Given the diversity among the 58 counties in California, we focused additional analysis on Executive Directors' responses by county geography to capture any important differences that might carry implications for the implementation of the School Readiness Initiative. This section reports on some of the general trends and impressions gleaned from the interviews. The classification of counties was based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, and the Office of Management and Budget. Counties were placed into one of three categories: (1) urban, (2) rural, and (3) urban counties with eligible rural census tracts.<sup>1</sup>

While counties share many of the same perspectives and experiences in regard to the School Readiness Initiative, interview responses also reveal some interesting geographic trends. The most significant of these trends are discussed below.

- *Collaboratives as an asset:* Numerous Executive Directors of rural counties cite strong partnerships and "a willingness to work together" as their greatest assets. These strengths have facilitated the integration of service provision. Partnering agencies such as the County Department of Education, the Local Childcare Planning Council, and local public health agencies have been extremely influential in the adoption of programming that will promote School Readiness.

Rural counties were more likely than urban areas to report the existence of an established collaborative focused on School Readiness. In the rural counties that have functioning collaboratives, numerous Executive Directors cite these groups as essential to sustaining not only School Readiness programs, but other Prop 10 early childhood ventures. In many of these rural communities, the established collaboratives have acted as advisors in designing their new School Readiness strategic plans.

<sup>1</sup> These categories differ somewhat with the rural, urban, and suburban caucuses that county executive directors have developed. Federal data was used to obtain geographic classifications that are based on uniform criteria.



Collaboratives tend to be more cohesive in these counties because they are so critical to program sustainability. As services and funding streams are often scarce, pooling of resources is a necessity. Moreover, agencies tend to be smaller and less bureaucratic in nature in rural communities. For this reason, collaborative groups may function more effectively in a rural setting because key players are able to come to the table and make executive decisions on the spot, rather than having to report back to their superiors before a definitive judgment can be made.

**? KEY FINDING:**

*? Rural counties are more likely than urban areas to report the existence of an established collaborative focused on School Readiness*

*? Rural counties express greater concern about the applicability of center-based models.*

*? Transportation and geographic isolation are important needs in rural areas.*

- *Models:* In general, rural counties express greater concern about the applicability of center-based models than do urban counties. While rural counties recognize the benefits of a center-based model, they assert that this design would not necessarily meet the needs of their communities.<sup>2</sup> Issues of transportation and the distances children and families need to travel to potential service centers, they explain, may render other models more appropriate for their counties.
- *Special challenges associated with serving rural populations:* Transportation and geographic isolation are needs that seem to be most apparent in rural communities and in urban communities with large incorporated rural regions. As many rural counties are spread across vast geographic areas, transportation is often problematic. The lack of mobility that some residents face makes acquiring services for their children and families a challenge.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE- COUNTIES' NEEDS AND INTERESTS

As originally conceived, this report's foremost objective was to gauge CoCFCs impressions of and responses to the School Readiness Initiative. At the request of CCFC, the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities agreed to conduct a brief survey regarding counties' interest in and preferences for obtaining technical assistance related to School Readiness.

CoCFCs were presented with a list of possible topics for technical assistance; participants were asked to rate the relative importance of these topics based on a four-point scale. More specifically, interviewees were instructed to assign a "1" to a topic if they considered it "very important," a "2" if they considered it "important," a "3" if they considered it "moderately important" and a "4" if they considered it "not very important."

<sup>2</sup> Center-based models are not mandated under the CCFC School Readiness Initiative. Flexibility in program design is encouraged to capitalize on local expertise and ingenuity.

The following tables reflect the responses of 52 CoCFCs that were interviewed as of August 3, 2001. Fifty-six cases are reported, as three counties—Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Modoc—had separate interviews with the Executive Director and various Commissioners. The total number of cases differed when interviewees failed to respond to a question. These differences are noted.

**? KEY FINDING:**

*CoCFCs identify the following topics as their top five choices for obtaining technical assistance:*

- ? long-term sustainability models;
- ? finance tools;
- ? schools' readiness for children;
- ? best practice models; and
- ? evaluation methods.

Analysis of survey responses indicates that counties have a strong interest in accessing technical assistance related to financing and sustaining School Readiness efforts.

Counties also express interest in obtaining assistance with program models, understanding schools' readiness for educating young children, and developing evaluation methods. Overall, CoCFCs identified the following topics as their top ten choices for obtaining technical assistance: long-term sustainability models, finance tools, schools' readiness for children, best practice models, evaluation methods, family and community supports, children's readiness for school, communications and marketing, partnership building assistance, family resource center examples.<sup>3</sup>

<b>Long-term Sustainability Models</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	49	88%
Important	5	9%
Moderately Important	1	2%
Not very Important	1	2%

<b>Finance Tools</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	47	84%
Important	7	13%
Moderately Important	1	2%
Not very Important	1	2%

<b>Schools' Readiness for Children</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	37	66%
Important	11	20%
Moderately Important	6	11%
Not very Important	2	4%

<sup>3</sup> CoCFCs top ten technical assistance needs are reported. For a complete list of county responses to these questions, see Appendix B.

<b>Best Practice Models</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	34	61%
Important	18	32%
Moderately Important	4	7%
Not very Important	0	0%

<b>Evaluation Methods</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	32	57%
Important	17	30%
Moderately Important	5	9%
Not very Important	2	4%

<b>Family and Community Supports</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	31	55%
Important	17	30%
Moderately Important	6	11%
Not very Important	2	4%

<b>Children's Readiness for School</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	29	52%
Important	11	20%
Moderately Important	13	23%
Not very Important	3	5%

<b>Communications and Marketing</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	27	48%
Important	19	34%
Moderately Important	6	11%
Not very Important	4	7%

<b>Partnership Building Assistance</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	26	46%
Important	11	20%
Moderately Important	13	23%
Not very Important	6	11%

<b>Family Resource Center Examples</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	25	45%
Important	21	38%
Moderately Important	9	16%
Not very Important	1	2%

### PREFERRED METHODS FOR OBTAINING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Counties were also asked to indicate their preferred methods for obtaining technical assistance. Site visits and email earned the highest ratings, with 54% of rating each of these methods as very important. Some methods, such as workshops and regional meetings, were not as popular with rural or geographically isolated counties as long travel times make them prohibitive. Further, teleconferences were mentioned as less valuable by a few counties who do not have the technical capacity to utilize them.

<b>Site Visits</b>		
<b>Level of Value</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Valuable	28	54%
Valuable	14	27%
Moderately Valuable	6	12%
Not Very Valuable	4	7%

<b>Email</b>		
<b>Level of Value</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Valuable	28	54%
Valuable	11	21%
Moderately Valuable	8	15%
Not Very Valuable	5	10%

<b>Regional Meetings</b>		
<b>Level of Value</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Valuable	24	46%
Valuable	16	31%
Moderately Valuable	8	15%
Not Very Valuable	4	8%

<b>Teleconferences</b>		
<b>Level of Value</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Valuable	20	39%
Valuable	17	33%
Moderately Valuable	14	27%
Not Very Valuable	1	2%
<b>Workshops</b>		
<b>Level of Value</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Valuable	19	37%
Valuable	26	50%
Moderately Valuable	7	14%
Not Very Valuable	0	0%

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Taken together, the results of the assessment suggest that tremendous opportunities exist to build on the efforts of the local CoCFCs to promote School Readiness. School Readiness appears to resonate with counties statewide; each of the counties indicates that the concept is reflected in their strategic plans. Moreover, interviews with local Executive Directors reveal that counties are beginning to develop and implement programs that foster children's preparedness for school.

However, the interviews also reveal that counties have very clear concerns regarding aspects of the proposed School Readiness Initiative. In particular, they articulate the need for:

- a working definition of School Readiness that is broadly useable;
- a more explicit statement about the intent for a holistic developmental focus for School Readiness that fosters all aspects of child development in an appropriate manner;
- an ongoing focus on equitable eligibility criteria;
- reaffirmation of the respect for local autonomy;<sup>4</sup>
- new systematic strategies to engage school districts as active partners; and
- information and assistance to facilitate program funding and long-term sustainability.

The following recommendations are suggested to address some of the issues that are raised by this research and enhance counties' capacities to implement the initiative. Moreover, these recommendations are intended to help generate broad-based support, and move the School Readiness agenda forward for the benefit of California's children.

- **Technical assistance to foster understanding of School Readiness:** While there is general support for school readiness as a goal of Prop 10 activities, conceptual and operational definitions of what school readiness means seem to vary. Some counties raise concerns about "their" notion of school readiness as compared to the State Commission's understanding of the concept. Whether these differences are substantive or minor, they may pose communication, implementation, and technical assistance problems as the initiative moves forward.

To successfully implement the initiative statewide, it is critical that counties possess a clear, uniform definition of School Readiness. Toward this end, CCFC

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<sup>4</sup> CCFC emphasizes that the School Readiness Initiative is designed to be maximally responsive to local needs, resources, and priorities. The State Commission does not propose a particular program model for implementation across California. Rather, it recommends the implementation of local programs and strategies that are both designed to meet community needs and combine program elements likely to generate desired results for children and families.

could take steps to communicate the broad-based definition of School Readiness to CoCFCs and policy makers across the state. In some counties, the concept paper served to clarify ambiguities regarding the term School Readiness. However, interview responses suggest that further assistance is needed. In particular, Executive Directors articulate the need for conceptual and operational definitions that include measures and benchmarks.

- **Facilitate the participation of school districts:** Educating California's children is becoming an increasingly difficult endeavor for many school districts and their communities. Schools are faced with limited resources, the view by some that School Readiness is beyond the core work of elementary schools, and a student population that may not enter school fully prepared to meet the high education standards that are in place. At the same time, policymakers and the public are giving heightened attention to standardized test scores as an indicator of school effectiveness.

Given these circumstances, it is critical that the State Commission consider embarking on a marketing campaign aimed at building support for the School Readiness Initiative among educators in the K-12 school system. This will require careful analysis and planning since the notion of school readiness used by the child development community can be at odds with the education community's understanding of the concept.<sup>5</sup> Reconciling these differences and "reframing" school readiness in a way that effectively communicates the intent of the Commission's initiative will be crucial to the launch of a strategic communication initiative.

Finally, CoCFCs might also consider allocating targeted money to provide technical assistance to schools regarding School Readiness issues. Possible strategies include facilitating information sharing between high performing schools in high poverty areas with low-performing schools. Steps such as this would reduce the perception that schools are being asked to take on yet another responsibility without adequate support.

- **Information and assistance to facilitate program funding and long-term sustainability:** Interview responses indicate that finance poses difficulties for counties across the state. The Commission might consider providing a series of finance tools to assist counties with identifying and utilizing fiscal strategies and methods for promoting long-term program sustainability. Also, to proceed with their School Readiness efforts in an informed, efficient manner, counties need clear criteria and possible resources regarding matching fund requirements. The state might consider issuing simple funding briefs to CoCFCs to provide resources about potential partnerships to support the "matching funds" requirements delineated in the RFF.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, consider the subject of child development. Professionals may adhere to one of numerous perspectives on the subject, including: developmental perspectives, view from birth, experience driven, focused on developmentally appropriate experience, education is maturation focus, etc.

- **Enhance local capacity to facilitate systems change:** As mentioned previously, when discussing their current School Readiness activities, most Executive Directors refer to their efforts to implement and enhance individual services or projects in their counties. Very few counties articulate a focus on utilizing the School Readiness Initiative as a vehicle for reconceptualizing how they deliver services to children and families. These responses suggest that additional strategic technical assistance in the area of facilitating systems change may be helpful for counties to assist with local development of a comprehensive system for School Readiness.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, it appears that county Prop 10 Commissions across California are well aware of the State's School Readiness Initiative. Interview responses suggest that the initiative is generating enthusiasm in many counties. Executive Directors are optimistic about the availability of additional resources to serve young children as well as the opportunity to establish stronger linkages with the K-12 education system. While counties are at various stages of the developmental process, they are beginning to plan for and implement School Readiness services; approximately three-fourths of the interview respondents indicate that they are currently funding School Readiness activities.

However, while supportive of the concept in general, a sizeable percentage of Executive Directors articulate numerous concerns regarding the initiative that the State Commission has delineated. First, many counties are grappling with defining the content and scope of their initiatives. Second, counties are endeavoring to balance (1) providing adequate support to previously identified areas of need and related activities, and (2) developing and implementing programs and services to address the new focus on School Readiness. Several counties also express dissatisfaction with the initiative's eligibility criteria. They articulate an interest in having the capacity to serve all children in their counties. Fourth, Executive Directors express reservations about what they view as the initiative's perceived focus on "academics." Finally, the interview data reveals that counties identify financial matters, regarding both current funding and long-term sustainability, as major areas of concern.

## SECTION II: SCHOOL READINESS SITE VISITS

Based on data obtained during the interviews that were conducted with the 52 CoCFCs, CCFC and the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities selected four locations in which to conduct site visits- Yuba, Santa Barbara, Riverside, and Orange counties. These counties were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) the presence of Prop 10 funded School Readiness activities that are directly linked to school sites; (2) progress achieved in developing and implementing School Readiness activities as of the interview date (i.e. Had School Readiness efforts progressed to a sufficient level so as to provide information and guidance that other CoCFCs could utilize in further developing their initiatives?) and (3) geographic representation (Do selected sites provide a balanced representation of urban and rural counties?)

Arrangements were made to visit selected sites during the months of September and October. Center staff developed a series of interview questions to guide the information gathering process during the site visits. On the day of the scheduled visits, Center staff met with key county personnel to document aspects of program design, planning, and implementation. The information obtained during these visits is presented in the following brief reports.



## ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

### Background

Located in Southern California, Orange County encompasses 26 school districts that serve children grades K-6. These districts operate a total of 567 schools and serve approximately 494,178 students. A sizeable early childhood population also resides in Orange County; in 1998, 284,635 children ages 0-5- approximately 10% of the total population- called Orange County home.

Although young children in Orange County are fortunate in many ways, demographic information reveals numerous economic, educational, health, and other social needs. For example, 13 of the 26 school districts are performing sufficiently poorly so as to meet the State Pilot Guidelines (Schools in deciles 1-3 on the API) for program participation. Eighty-two percent of the County's 382 elementary schools are eligible for school readiness funds. Just over 40% of the student population is in the free or reduced lunch program based on family income guidelines. As of February 1999, funding allowed approximately 10,000 children in Orange County to enroll in California Department of Education subsidized childcare programs. However, a centralized eligibility list contains the names of 20,000 more children whose families were income eligible for these child care services but are unable to participate due to insufficient government funding.

In analyzing this type of countywide data, community and collaborative research reports, geographic information mapping, and community input, Orange County has identified six areas gaps and barriers to services for young children and their families:

- Access to Services;
- Knowledge About Available Services;
- Data Collection for Key Indicators, such as substance exposed births, immunization rates, school readiness assessments, and child care needs;
- Consensus Around the Definition of School Readiness;
- Knowledge About What Works in Certain Areas (research findings documenting the effectiveness of many parent education programs is missing); and
- Inadequate Developmental Assessments and Early Detection of Chronic Disabling Conditions.

### Orange County School Readiness Initiative

CFC-OC has considered School Readiness an integral part of its efforts since the adoption of its strategic plan. Orange County's School Readiness initiative is a two-year program with the overall goal of increasing the number of children entering the school system ready to learn. The program is intended to identify service gaps in the area of School Readiness, promote best practices for School Readiness, and develop new local initiatives. The Commission has established flexibility in the development of the initiative by considering both school-based and school-linked strategies.

Orange County recognizes that the assets, capacity, and infrastructure in its communities can serve as effective platforms for launching and developing this initiative. The Commission has sought to partner with school districts and community providers to develop a systemic approach to improving outcomes for young children. Understanding the necessity of a strong relationship with school districts and the increasing pressure schools are under to demonstrate academic performance, the Commission has worked closely with the County Superintendents office to develop a strong partnership. Through this partnership, the Commission works with districts to develop a common vision and approach as well as reduce potential concerns about new initiatives, expectations, accountability, funding and sustainability.

At an operational level, the first step in the initiative was the allocation of Proposition 10 funds to each school district to hire a School Readiness Coordinator. The program provides \$2,465,000 annually to fund between 1/2 and 2 full-time coordinators for each school district in the county. The number of coordinators for each district is based on the size of the district and number of enrolled students. To fortify the districts' involvement in the initiative, the recruitment and selection of the coordinator is made by the district. The Orange County Department of Education was also funded to assist in facilitating the implementation of the initiative. In addition, the Commission created a full-time position on its staff to provide overall coordination for these efforts.

The coordinators' primary function is to provide a link between the school district and early care and education providers, parents, community-based organizations, and other community resources. Coordinators are responsible for (1) developing a plan that identifies the needs of children and families within their community, (2) providing technical assistance to providers and parents to prepare children for school, and (3) creating smoother transitions for children as they enter school. The coordinators work with teachers and early childhood educators to increase communication, approaches, and understanding.

The funding of school readiness centers in four districts constituted Orange County's next step in operationalizing its School Readiness initiative. The implementation of these four centers reinforces the Commission's approach to building upon existing community resources and providing flexible in determining whether a school-based or school-linked model should be adopted. The Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities visited the following centers: 1) Garden Grove School District School Readiness Program; 2) Ocean View School District: Oakview Preschool and Education Resource Center; 3) Santa Ana School District: Warwick Square Project; and 4) Tustin School District: Lyon Street Parent Center/Healthy Start. Brief descriptions of these centers are provided below.

### **Garden Grove School District School Readiness Program**

In the summer of 2001, the Garden Grove School District worked in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of Garden Grove to conduct the "School Readiness Summer Pilot Program." The Garden Grove School District (GGSD) serves over 50,000 students

in 7 different cities. 42.2% of the student population is Hispanic, 40.9% is Caucasian, 12.1% is Asian, 2% is African American, 1.4% is Filipino, .6% is Pacific Islander, and .5% is Native American. With half of its student population classified as English Language Learners, Garden Grove educates students that speak a total of 62 different languages.

The joint effort between the school district and the Boys and Girls Club, served 81 students from 3 schools, all of which had API scores in the 3<sup>rd</sup> decile or lower. Children were selected if they had pre-registered for Kindergarten or if they had no previous preschool experience. Applicants were given high priority if they had an older sibling that had been retained.

Each of these collaborative partners lent their unique resources and skills to the development of the program. For example, the school district assumed responsibility for developing and preparing the program curriculum. In the course of these preparations, they reviewed numerous papers/resources (See Appendix A) to guide them in structuring the program. The three primary documents they referred to were 1) "Getting Ready to Learn": San Mateo County; 2) "Pre-Kindergarten and Developmental Guidelines": CDE 2000; and 3) "Ready to Learn-Universal Preschool": CDE 1998. Ultimately, staff shared responsibility for assessing and selecting the program curriculum.

The school district also facilitated the testing of select toys that staff would utilize as part of the School Readiness program. Staff tested three different kinds of toy groups to determine which toys worked best to increase gross motor skills. Both the Garden Grove School District, the Prop 10 Commission, and the Boys and Girls Club wanted to use the pilot as an opportunity to not only serve children, but to conduct hands on research to determine how to further develop their School Readiness Program. In fact, the Prop 10 Commission stated, "we did the planning through serving."

The Boys and Girls Club operated the program out of its facility, with daily classes running from 8am to 11:15 and 12:15 to 3:30pm. Program administrators hired 3 credentialed teachers, a new first grade teacher, a special education teacher, and a teacher with 32 years of experience for the pilot. Instructional aides working in the school district were also hired. Each class had two instructional aides, one Spanish speaking and the other Vietnamese. This arrangement made the program more accessible for a culturally and linguistically diverse population of children.

Families were actively engaged in the summer program. Program guidelines required parents to participate in weekly parent training sessions and volunteer each week in a classroom. Recognizing that many of the families had limited supplies and space for learning in their homes, a "Backpack" project was implemented. Each child/family received a backpack that was stocked with various materials to stimulate learning. All of the written materials distributed throughout the course of the program were in English, Vietnamese, and Chinese to facilitate learning for both the families and the children. The backpacks were re-stocked at each parent training session with new materials. By the end of the four-week class 100% of the backpacks, and all of the materials that had been

added to them, remained intact- demonstrating families' respect and appreciation for the new learning tools given to them.

The program also utilized the "Camera Project" as a strategy for engaging families. Each family was given a disposable camera to take pictures of their child and family members doing "homework". At the end of the four-week class, staff compiled the pictures that the families had taken into a Parent Training Manual. The purpose of the Parent Training Manual was to provide a visual guide on how to assist your child with homework and other learning activities. This manual enabled parents who use English as a second language or are still grappling with literacy issues of their own to learn how to be their child's first teacher despite the challenges they face.

The pilot produced four desired results:

- children are personally and socially competent
- children are effective learners
- children show physical and motor competence
- children are safe and healthy

Based upon the initial success of the pilot, the partnership plans to serve 150 families by April of 2002. Their long-term goal is to implement the School Readiness Summer program in every school in the Garden Grove District.

### **Ocean View School District: Oakview Preschool and Education Resource Center**

Oakview Preschool and Education Resource Center is an example of a school-linked effort that integrates an elementary school, Head Start, Family Resource Center and Preschool/Education Resource Center. The Oakview Preschool and Education Resource Center opened September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001. It is directly adjacent to a Head Start program, Oakview Elementary School, and a Family Resource Center based within the school. Classes operate from 8-11:15 and 12:15-3:30 daily. Together, the Oakview Preschool and Head Start serve a total of 192 three and four year olds. Children are selected for the program if they have an older sibling that has been retained.

Placing a strong emphasis on health and early assessment, the Center's goal is to serve all children one year prior to entering kindergarten. A nurse, funded by Prop 10, will provide home visits, health screenings, referrals, and education to children and families. In addition, the Center will serve 100 children, ages 0 through 3, through the Parents As Teachers Home Visiting Program. Families that participate in the Home Visiting Program will receive a monthly visit from an in-home teacher that will provide support, materials and instruction.

The establishment of Oakview Preschool and Education Resource Center has positively impacted the community as a whole. Prior to the creation of the center, the program site had been a park that was an eyesore to the community and active with drug use and drug dealing. The site has since been completely transformed and is now considered a

community asset. Adults attend English as a Second Language classes while their children receive quality childcare, and parents living in the surrounding community have access to an affordable preschool program that is walking distance from their homes. In addition, The Oakview Preschool has provided a platform for parents in the same community to meet each other and increase the level of linkage between the school and the community.

### **Santa Ana School District: Warwick Square Project**

Warwick Square is a 500-unit apartment complex that houses 225 children ages 0 to 5. The apartment complex was rehabilitated 5 years ago as part of a community revitalization project and now offers a Family Resource Center on-site. The Family Resource Center provides numerous services, including: after school tutoring and homework assistance, ESL classes through the local Community College, supplemental food and formula distribution, arts and crafts classes, Story Lady (reading to children), basic computer skills training, prenatal and maternal education as well as parenting classes, Health Fairs, homeownership education, citizenship classes, health promoter, linkage to bookmobile, summer lunch program, CPR and safety awareness classes, martial arts classes, credit counseling classes, employment workshops and information, In-Home childcare licensing program recruitment and assistance, Healthy Families application assistance, and information and referral services.

Through Prop 10 funding and the School Readiness Initiative, Warwick Square will soon offer a preschool program for 50 children. In addition, they will provide a Home Visiting Program that uses the Parent And Child Time (PACT) home visiting model. The overall model will integrate the Family Resource Center, preschool, adult education and home visiting and link services to the local school and a literacy program that is operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

### **Tustin School District: Lyon Street Parent Center/Healthy Start**

Lyon Street Parent Center/Healthy Start is a school-linked project that is located on the grounds of a large apartment complex. Lyon Street Parent Center was chosen as a site for School Readiness due to its proximity to two schools as well as the large number of young children living in the apartments. The Center currently provides assistance with Healthy Families applications, parent education in Spanish, conflict resolution counseling, assistance with homework, linkage with Orange County Hospital Mobile unit, and other services.

Through Prop 10 funding and the School Readiness Initiative they will be adding preschool, Home Visiting, Mommy and Daddy classes, and additional referral services. Through its current services, Lyon Street has been able to develop trust with families and increase access as well as knowledge of available services. With the addition of preschool and other services, Lyon Street Parent Center will become an outstanding resource for the families and children living next to it.

## Lessons Learned-Keys to Success

- *Build on the strengths of the community.* Rather than implementing entirely new projects that would require significant cost and time, the School Readiness Program identified assets in the community, i.e. Boys and Girls Clubs, Family Resource Centers, and community parks and added specific early childhood education components onto those platforms.
- *Flexibility is critical in the development of the program.* Orange County has embraced the notion that both school-based and school-linked models are equally viable and a “one-size” fits all model is not appropriate. A flexible approach complements the identification of and building upon community assets in implementing community specific School Readiness programs.
- *The importance of a strong partnership with the County Office of Education.* With 26 school district and almost 400 elementary schools, communication, trust, shared responsibility and commitment are critical issues. Through the County Office of Education, the Commission gains access to and credibility with the districts and superintendents. Planning and implementation is also facilitated. The Commission in funding the County Office of Education to assist in the coordination of the initiative has been a solid investment of Proposition 10 resources.
- *Leadership from District Superintendents.* To establish the direct linkage between the early childhood education efforts and the elementary school, leadership from the district superintendent is essential. The Superintendent from the Garden Grove School District has articulated a clear vision the supports the importance of early childhood education, she has personified the vision through her actions, and has committed to expanding and sustaining the effort.
- *Leadership from the Commission and Executive Director.* The Commission’s membership includes educators with expertise in early childhood education. These members have played important roles in shaping the policy of the commission and in helping to establish its priority within the Commission’s strategic plan. The Executive Director has provided day-to-day leadership and has skillfully navigated the complex terrain between the various educational, health and community provider systems.
- *Hiring and placing School Readiness Coordinators in each school district and the County Office of education.* The Hiring of School Readiness Coordinators exemplifies Orange County Prop 10 Commissions commitment to building the necessary infrastructure that is not yet present, but is needed to effectively implement the School Readiness Initiative. The School Readiness Coordinators have played a key role in creating and building interest and commitment by and within the school districts, which is an important element of the School Readiness Initiative. In fact, having a “champion” for School Readiness at the district and/or school level can have a significant impact on the acceptance and success of current and future projects. The School Readiness Coordinators have been important in collectively identifying

systemic policy and practice issues. By being the single point of contact for School Readiness in each district the School Readiness Coordinators can facilitate communication, integration, and provide a base from which the School Readiness programs can grow to be as effective as possible.

- *By having School Readiness Coordinators, Orange County Prop 10 has also been able to more easily identify the various needs and assets of communities in their district.* The School Readiness Coordinator can then use the information they have to collaborate with the school district, Prop 10, and the community to develop the best program possible. In this way, the School Readiness assist the Commission in avoiding using a “cookie cutter” approach that can limit the effectiveness of a program.
- *Hiring a School Readiness Coordinator on the Commission Staff.* Having a staff with expertise in the area of early childhood education as well as credibility within the early childhood education community and schools has proven to be an invaluable resource to the Commission. The coordinator has been key in developing partnerships with school districts and with working with the Office of Education.
- *Avoid protracted planning.* Orange County has chosen a “prototyping” approach to developing School Readiness programs that de-emphasizes protracted planning cycles and instead emphasizes testing various practices and models and then choosing the best one for larger scale implementation. This prototyping method is a “learn as we go” approach. The Garden Grove School Readiness Program, implemented in conjunction with the Garden Grove Boys and Girls Club started working with children and families the day after the contract was signed. Rather than taking months to figuring out the best curriculum, several different ones were tested and evaluated while providing services to children.
- *Long-term viability will require the integration of various funding sources and infrastructure assets.* Each of the programs visited during the site visit had elements that reflect the necessary foundation for sustainability. In Garden Grove, the partnership with the Boys and Girls Club provided quality facilities, while the use of instructional aides provided the staffing, and blending of various funding sources created a solid financial base. In Oak View, the partnership with the Family Resource Center as well as the contribution of the community property to provide a site for the preschool has facilitated sustainability. At both the Warwick complex and the Lyon Street Parent Center space was provided in return for the development of the School Readiness programs.
- *An ongoing challenge is to sustain a long term funding commitment when the actual results may not be forthcoming for several years.* The significant pressure districts are under for producing academic results compounds this challenge.

- *Evaluation is essential and needs to be built in at the front-end.* A challenge with the evaluation of this initiative will be in devising an evaluation plan that can accommodate the different kinds of School Readiness programs.

#### **Appendix A: Tools used by Orange County Children and Families Commission**

- Curriculum Development Resources for School Readiness:
  1. Getting Ready to Learn (San Mateo County)
  2. Pre-K Learning and Development. Guidelines (CDE, 2000)
  3. Ready to Learn - Universal Preschool (CDE, 1998)
  4. First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education for Preschool, Kindergarten, and First Grade (CDE)
  5. Desired Results – Pre-kindergarten State Standards for California (CDE, 1999)
  6. Results to be Achieved (Prop.10, CCFC, March 2000)
  7. The School Readiness CD: A Compilation of Resources (CCFC of Orange County [smilburn@fullerton.edu](mailto:smilburn@fullerton.edu))
  8. A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School with the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed (Child Mental Health Foundation)
  9. School Readiness 2001 Discussion Paper (CDE)
  10. Continuity for Young Children, Positive Transitions to Elementary School (CDE, 1997)
  11. Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children (NAEYC, 1998)
  12. Early Childhood Education Topic Packet (ASCD, 1999)
  13. Recommended Readings in Literature (CDE, 1996)
  14. Books for Preschoolers (Booksource)
  15. School Involvement in Early Childhood (U.S. Department of Education, 2000)
  16. Promoting Early Literacy Through Family Involvement (Educational Research Service, 1997)
  17. Safe Active Play (Video Active Productions)
  18. Ready to Learn (DK Publishers, through the California Endowment)
  19. Far Ago and Long Away: Innovative Storytelling (Indiana's Child Care Collection)
  20. Food for Thought: Nutrition and Children (Indiana's Child Care Collection)
  21. Preschool Key Experiences: Creative Representation (High/Scope)
  22. Preschool Key Experiences: Language and Literacy (High/Scope)
- Backpack project
- Camera Project



## RIVERSIDE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

### Background

Covering a total of 7,200 miles, Riverside is the fourth largest county in California. Riverside's population is estimated at approximately 1.4 million, and an estimated 162,000 children between the ages of 0-5 years reside in the county. Riverside County spans 23 school districts and 367 schools; school enrollment is estimated at approximately 319,000 children.

Young children in Riverside County face numerous challenges. For example, 26% of the families living in poverty have a child under 5 years of age, and forty-nine percent of the K-12 student population is eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. The lack of quality childcare is an issue of tremendous concern. It is estimated that over 144,000 children are in need of care; however, the county only has 23,000 childcare slots available. Of those children needing care, 7,000 are on waiting lists for subsidized slots with the County Office of Education. Although Head Start operates in the county, it serves only 23% of the need in the county.

The Commission has identified 5 principal goals in its strategic plan. In the course of implementing Prop 10, Commissioners intend to:

- create a comprehensive information and referral system;
- expand the availability and affordability of quality child care that is linked to health and child/family education;
- provide access to affordable, comprehensive and preventative health services;
- expand literacy programs and programs to ensure children are ready for school; and
- develop a master plan in support of families.

In pursuit of these goals, Riverside County Children and Families Commission has established the following benchmarks:

- by December 2005, 50% of all child care providers will have successfully completed an approved early childhood training program;
- by December 2005, the number of affordable, full-day preschool spaces will increase by 30%; and
- by December 2005, 50% of families will have participated in an early literacy training activity.

### Riverside County Approach to School Readiness

Based on 1998 data, 93 schools across the county's 23 districts qualify for School Readiness funds. The Commission plans on applying for Tier 1 funding in January of 2001 and will receive a total of \$2.6 million from CCFC to implement the School Readiness initiative.

To support its work, the Commission established several technical advisory committees, including the Education and Early Literacy Committee and the Health Committee. As a result of the work that these committees conducted, the commission adopted the following approach to School Readiness:

To effectively meet the goal of School Readiness...the Education Committee recommends focusing on the whole child: care, education, health, nutrition, and physical and cognitive development. The method of delivery of services will be multi-disciplinary, integrated teams providing services to young children and their families at regional service centers strategically placed in regions of the county.

Using a case management model, the teams will develop individual family plans to assist in the growth and development of the child and family connection to community services.

(Riverside County Education Committee, April 23, 2001)

At this time RCCFC plans on building 4 (possibly more in the future) regional centers. The centers will be strategically placed in the Western, Mid region, and Eastern Region of Riverside County. There will be one facility in the Western region, one in the Mid region and two in the Eastern region of the county. The Eastern region will have two regional centers because of its size as well as transportation concerns common to the rural communities in the area.

The decision to have four regional centers was determined by utilizing Global Information Systems mapping, data provided by the 1999 Community Assessment prepared for county Head Start programs, the 1999 Community Profile prepared by the United Way of Inland Valleys, and Needs Assessment data collected by resource and referral. Expanded services will be provided by satellite centers in order to provide services to residents who have limited access to the regional School Readiness centers.

Services will be provided from the County Department of Mental Health, County Department of Health, Department of Public and Social Services, RCOE, as well as other county department staff. A regional service manager, secretary, computer technician, and other staff will provide assistance.

The Commission has recognized that establishing these regional service centers and satellite programs require specific expertise. To address this need, they decided to hire a School Readiness Coordinator and a Facilities Coordinator. The Commission realized that finding the right person for the job of School Readiness Coordinator would not be an easy task, as the type of qualifications they were looking for are not common. To solve this problem, the Commission turned to school districts to identify potential candidates for the job. With assistance from the school district, the Commission found the perfect person and bought her contract from the Office of Education. The School Readiness Coordinator they hired had previously worked as a coordinator for Head Start, held a

position in the Child Development program within the Department of Health and Human Services and was well versed in working with both school districts and the private sector.

The Facilities Coordinator had worked with the County Office of Education for many years and had recently retired. Upon hearing about her expertise in facilities, budgets, and contracts the Commission managed to get her to work for them 60-70% time. Since Riverside's School Readiness efforts revolve around building new facilities or renovating old ones, bringing an expert to the table that has gone through similar processes has proven to be invaluable to the Commission.

In addition, the Commission felt that it was important to involve schools in the planning process, so they decided to hold workshops with districts throughout the county. During the workshops, the Commission will explore and identify school districts' specific needs and assess districts' "readiness" to plan and implement School Readiness projects. The Commission will then work with the districts to develop RFA's.

Participating school districts will be asked to measure children's readiness for school, physical well-being, motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, cognition, and general knowledge. In addition, they will be expected to: explore approaches that have raised achievement for each student; demonstrate a willingness to alter practices and programs that do not benefit children; and make sure students have access to services and supports in the community.

### **Riverside County School Readiness Project**

To initiate the development of its first School Readiness Center, the Commission has formed a partnership with the Perris School District, the Riverside County Office of Education, the Riverside County Public Health Department, and other agencies.

Perris School District has actively been expanding its preschool and after school activities in order to improve the educational outcomes of its students. The Superintendent, Tony Arredondo, was inspired by the "Preschool Academy" model for 2-5 year olds he learned of through collaborating with Mexican education providers. Tony decided that his school district would benefit from a similar program and became determined to find a way of creating an "academy" in his district. After discussing the possibilities with various community individuals and the County Superintendent of Schools, he learned of Prop 10 funding and other resources.

Through careful planning and collaboration, Perris School District and the Riverside County Children and Families Commission are now planning to open the "Rob Reiner Children and Family Development Center." The academy has "braided" together resources to serve children from 2.5-5 year olds and will provide the following services/facilities:

- child development/childcare center;
- early literacy staff development center with meeting rooms;

- parent education center;
- speech and language assessment center;
- district parent child enrichment program;
- CAL-SAFE (teen mother program including infant care);
- district community outreach program;
- ROP child development classrooms;
- dental clinic and ROP dental lab;
- lending library (resource materials, high chairs, cribs, car seats, toys, etc..);
- office of the regional center coordinator and staff; and
- other appropriate programs to be determined.

Planning is underway with key partners from the County Office of Education's Regional Occupation Program (ROP), the County Department of Health, and other providers regarding the infrastructure needed to provide services. The plan calls for the Regional Occupational Program to place students at the center to be trained as child care providers for center and home based child care. In addition, ROP will place students that are interested in becoming dental assistants in the proposed dental clinic. The Dental clinic will offer a full range of treatment and prevention services. The Commission will provide funding to treat 0-5 year old children who do not qualify for Federal or State programs that pay for dental care.

The Commission is also initiating the implementation of a "211" call system for health and human services. "211" will support the regional service centers by acting as an information and referral resource to parents and providers. The Commission is committing \$250,000 to develop the system, which will be available in multiple languages 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Finally, because of the large rural and isolated areas of the county, this school readiness model will develop satellite capabilities. A distance learning approach will be utilized that maximizes technology. Examples of the types of information being considered include infant/toddler pre-K guidelines for language development, pre-K learning and developmental guidelines.

The site will represent the first regional School Readiness Center funded by Prop 10. As part of this partnership, the district is contributing land, physical plant infrastructure and the other services needed to sustain the Center. The Commission is expected to contribute \$2,400,000.00 by June 30, 2002. Operational expenses will come from a variety of funding sources including State Pre-school, Title 1, Medicaid and Federally Qualified Health Center funding. Lease payments subsequent to the first year will be included as part of the overhead costs of on-site service providers.

A "Decision Sharing" Council- which is being convened by Prop 10 and that will be composed of parents, school personnel, and community representatives- will govern the Center. The group will provide leadership, planning and decision making for the academy.

## Lessons Learned-Keys to Success

- *Partner with existing collaboratives that share a similar vision for children and families.* The Riverside County Child Care Consortium has a long history of advocating for children and families. For over 13 years there has been a focus on early childhood development. Proposition 10 has helped coalesce the work of those advocating in this area. The Commission has effectively worked with the Consortium in the development of its School Readiness Initiative. Through this partnership the Commission gains access to and credibility with organizations throughout the county.
- *Leadership creates opportunities for program innovation.* The leadership provided by the Perris School District Superintendent and School Board exemplifies how opportunity can be borne from crisis. Four years ago the district's six elementary schools were identified as low performing schools. The school district and the schools have recently been recognized for significant improvements. From that period of time a vision has been developed that includes a universal pre-school and supportive services for all children and families in the district.
- *Planning is essential. It is crucial that time is allotted and taken to do what is right.* Riverside has worked extensively with its technical advisory committees, the County Office of Education, county agencies, and community providers in the development of their school readiness initiative. They have maintained a focus on their principal mission and goals, which have provided support throughout the planning process.
- *A strong working relationship with the County Office of Education is vital.* The County Office of Education provides an important link between the Commission and the individual school districts. School districts and superintendents vary in their interest and initiative regarding early childhood education. The office of education can help foster communication and understanding on the importance of early childhood education as it relates to school success.
- *Partnering with local city planners can expedite the implementation process.* The Riverside model for establishing regional service centers may require approval from local municipalities on various land use issues. Developing relationships with city/county planners and keeping them informed of the plans and issues can expedite the start-up process.
- *Proposition 10 funding as a catalyst for long-term sustainability.* The Commission's principal financial role in the model is providing start-up or seed money. By financing infrastructure and building a strong operational platform, the Commission will likely yield a high long-term return on their investment.
- *Staff with specialized expertise is necessary to address technical and logistical issues.* The Commission has hired a School Readiness Coordinator with knowledge and experience in early childhood development and education. In addition a Facilities

Coordinator with experience in budget, contracts as well as building has been hired to address all physical plant issues. The Commission has also retained the services of an architect.

- *Develop complementary planning processes with service providers.* Not all providers will be able to offer full-time onsite services as part of the regional service center. However, by having complementary planning processes, services can be more coordinated. For example, in the Perris School District area, the county's Public Health Department is planning to open a full service clinic. Once they learned of the Rob Reiner Children and Family Development Center, the Health Department started planning with the school district so as to decrease duplication of services and increase comprehensiveness. In fact, the Health Department is planning on operating shuttles between the clinic and the Children and Family Development Center.
- *Connecting regional services centers to increase awareness and knowledge.* The Commission has identified the need to train family care providers, raise the standards of care, and to increase their status as providers of an important service. The School Readiness centers will be used as community teaching and education facilities that will then "flood" the county with quality education and training for family care providers.
- *Pre-qualifying architects saves time and energy.* When architects and builders in the area learned of RCCFC plans to develop School Readiness Centers they began making daily sales calls to the Commission. The Commission was bombarded with multiple calls a day, often times resulting in wasted time and energy. They learned that a solution was to "pre-qualify" architects by establishing a comprehensive list of what experience and expertise architects must have to qualify for the job. The number one criteria they have established is that architects who apply must have experience with building schools and or public facilities. The primary reason for this is that public schools must meet the standards of the California Field Act, which requires buildings to meet strict seismic design and construction methods. The Commission is working with a lawyer to determine the legal language that will be used in the detailed description of the requirements architects must meet to be qualified for the job. The pre-qualification system will automatically decrease the number of possible bidders, thereby streamlining and simplifying the selection process, which has proven to be a time intensive and complex.

## Conclusion

The Riverside Children and Families Commission has chosen to use the substantial funding available to them to build School Readiness Centers that are strategically placed through out the county. In addition, they will have Satellite Centers that can offer services to communities that may have difficulty accessing the Regional Centers. RCCFC is also working with school districts to develop additional programs that meet individual community needs. Finally, RCCFC has emphasized the importance of careful planning. They have supported this effort by collaborating with county agencies, community groups, and hiring staff with the appropriate expertise.

## **SANTA BARBARA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION**

### **Background**

Santa Barbara County's approximately 416,000 residents are situated through out a large, geographically diverse area. The southern end of the county is characterized as the most urban area, while the central and northern parts of the county are rural and rely on an agricultural economy. Santa Barbara County's 16 school districts operate 110 schools and serve approximately 66,000 students- 25% of whom are classified as English Language Learners. Children under the age of 5 represent 9% of the County's total population; 860 of these children qualify for special education services, with speech-language impairment accounting for 73% of the cases.

Despite the perception that Santa Barbara is comprised of wealthy individuals, an estimated 19% of children in the county live in poverty. Forty-one percent of students in the county qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Moreover, the average salary per worker is significantly less than the California average and more than half of children ages 0 to 5 live with single mothers. The high cost of living in Santa Barbara County exacerbates these economic difficulties.

Through the strategic planning process, which took place in 1999, the Commission identified a number of needs including: 1) Lack of education around pregnancy and child development; 2) Barriers to accessing services due to income, acculturation, education, family structure, and language barriers; 3) Inaccessible services for special medical, mental health and learning needs; and 4) Demand far outstrips capacity for quality, affordable childcare. In fact, the total estimated number of childcare slots is 12,457. The need is so great, that 6,500 children are maintained on a waiting list of which 2,000 await subsidized slots.

In response to these findings, the Commission decided to focus on establishing a number of projects, including a county-wide integrated structure that supports early care and education and the establishment of a communication system between preschool programs and K-12 schools. In addition, they wanted to develop scholarships for low and moderate-income families, support existing parent education programs provided within the early care and education community, and establish or enhance quality integrated community-based Family Resource Centers.

### **Santa Barbara County's Approach to School Readiness**

Santa Barbara has adopted a community based, full continuum approach to School Readiness. As a Commission, they feel that School Readiness can be addressed most effectively by focusing on the whole child from the prenatal stage through high school.

Services are integrated with and built upon existing community platforms and aim to serve the needs of the whole family.

The Commission has been working with well-established collaborative structures such as the Kids Network and the Childcare Planning Council to implement various projects. The Commission began their School Readiness efforts by partnering with Healthy Start to expand services to 0-5 year old children. They have since funded “Welcome Every Baby” (WEB), which provides support and referrals for newborns, and a summer pre-k program. In addition, they are currently conducting community outreach and engagement efforts to guide them in the development of further School Readiness projects.

“Community Conversations” exemplify Santa Barbara County’s commitment to involving community stakeholders—parents, providers, government representatives and others—in the identification of needs and strategies. “Community Conversations” are discussion meetings that are led by trusted entities within different communities. “Community Conversations” allow the Commission to hear first hand what specific community needs exist and build programs according to those needs. These meetings also provide a forum for the Commission to pursue its strong commitment to identifying and addressing the cultural and linguistic needs of its constituents. In fact, the Commission is going to take information gained from “Community Conversations” and work with school districts in those areas to develop School Readiness programs based on the needs identified during the meetings.

### **School Readiness Projects**

#### **Welcome Every Baby (WEB)**

Santa Barbara’s School Readiness continuum begins with Welcome Every Baby (WEB). Because early intervention and early screening are so important to a child’s later success in life, Santa Barbara considers WEB a critical element of its School Readiness initiative. WEB’s mission is to provide screening, education, support and referral services to all newborns, toddlers and their families through comprehensive, family-centered, voluntary, culturally appropriate services. WEB has a direct relationship to School Readiness because it creates interest in early childhood learning and assists parents in being aware of their role as their child’s first teacher.

WEB began operating in March of 2001. Currently, they are working on Phase I of the program, which entails providing home visits to approximately 450 newborns with fathers and/or mothers under the ages of 25 in 7 zip codes throughout Santa Barbara County. Since WEB is a universal program, they are using zip codes as a means of organizing whom to serve first. The intent of WEB is to provide services to all newborns in the Santa Barbara County, which totals approximately 6000 children per year.

WEB has Multi-disciplinary teams in the North and South county areas that meet regularly to coordinate case management and referrals. “WEB has provided for regular



contacts among agencies who may not normally meet, and some agencies have already adopted standards into their current programming based on WEB service recommendations. Collaborations and networking on various programming have begun to occur among agencies.” (WEB New Born Home Visiting Initiative Strategic Plan)

WEB staff salaries are paid for with Prop 10 funds, but they are employed by the County Department of Public Health. Home visitation services will be performed by two well-established community-based providers, Sojourn and CALM. The home visitors will have bachelors and masters degrees, with a background in early childhood development. Each newborn will receive a minimum of 3 visits within the first 9 months. During the home visits mothers and fathers will be 1) taught about early childhood development; 2) educated about how to create and maintain a safe environment; 3) encouraged to breastfeed as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics; and 4) advised to access health care and other community resources for their families.

Through its design, WEB has also emphasized the importance of involving fathers in the development of young children. WEB has made it a priority to make information relevant to men as well as becoming aware of services that would benefit fathers as well as mothers. WEB included the role of fathers throughout all of its planning and development.

Although its central mission is home visitation, WEB staff spends a significant amount of time in community capacity and collaboration building. They have brought together organizations that heretofore had not worked in collaboration to create a common mission and strategy. WEB staff has also identified community assets that have had little, if any direct involvement in early childhood issues and created linkages to those resources. For example, WEB has established a partnership with the local cable television station that has agreed to produce and broadcast shows on early childhood development. As a result of its relationship with WEB, the Kiwanis Club will purchase books and a library card to be included in the materials given to parents.

### **Santa Barbara Healthy Start Platforms**

As mentioned previously, Santa Barbara’s Children and Families Commission (SBCFC) strategic plan stressed the tactical priority of building on existing service platforms. Since Healthy Start is well established in Santa Barbara County, it provided an excellent framework for the development SBCFC School Readiness projects.

The Commission started working with Santa Barbara Healthy Start programs early on in their strategic planning process. Both the Commission and Healthy Start directors recognized that it would be beneficial for them to address issues collaboratively. Consequently, they began meeting as a group two years ago. These meetings have played a very important role in the work of both SBCFC and Santa Barbara Healthy Start programs. The Commission coordinates the meetings, while Renee Pavelski and Michael Bates, UCSB Graduate Students, work more intimately with the group.

Prior to Prop 10 none of the Healthy Start programs in Santa Barbara County had offered services to families with children under five.

### **Santa Barbara School District Healthy Starts**

The Santa Barbara School District has administered Healthy Start since 1992. Since then, Healthy Start's budget has grown from \$ 400,000 to over \$1 million; the district now operates 14 Healthy Start sites. Prop 10 is the primary funding source that enables Healthy Start to expand services to 0-5. More specifically, as part of their School Readiness efforts, Prop 10 has funded: 3 new Family Advocates that serve 0-5 year old children and their siblings; the Summer Immersion Program (to be described later in the paper); the development of play kit supplies; 10 months of a coordinator's salary; and part of the salary of the Director.

Another way Healthy Start has played an important role in School Readiness is by conducting parenting workshops. They have made the workshops open to any one who wishes to attend. In order to reach as many community members as possible, Healthy Start conducted extensive outreach, these efforts culminated in the attendance of 175 parents- 40% of which were fathers- at one such meeting. The workshops were designed to be both accessible and engaging. This necessitated that the workshop leaders speak fluent Spanish and function as an expert on the topics at hand. Workshop session topics include: discipline, effective parenting skills, and language development.

In addition to the workshops, Santa Barbara Healthy Start has put together 25 unique play kits that emphasize different areas of development and are designed to encourage positive parent child interaction. This year they developed "Home Play Kits for the Early Years", which were designed for toddlers. Next they plan on developing play kits for infants and their parents. The play kits are given to families on a loan basis, or, whenever possible, given to them to keep permanently. This year, through Prop 10 funding, Santa Barbara Healthy Start was able to give away 1,300 play kits.

### **Santa Barbara School District Healthy Start: School Readiness Summer Immersion Program**

The Pre-K Summer Immersion Program was designed to accomplish two primary goals: 1) increase school readiness in children who will be entering kindergarten through a 4 week pre-k literacy program; and 2) provide a framework for Healthy Start to collaborate with University of California at Santa Barbara in developing evaluation questions and criteria for School Readiness pre-k programs.

Renee Pavelski, M.A., researched 13 national and state-level School Readiness assessments. She found that 20 different areas, also known as "domains" (i.e. language development, social development) were measured most often. She found that only 2 out of 20 most frequently used domains address contextual factors, such as family characteristics. Family characteristics would encompass such things as whether or not a family reads to their child, whether or not they know where they can find services for

their family, or whether or not a family has taken their child to the library in the past 3 months. Since environment or “contextual factors” are known to strongly influence children’s School Readiness it became apparent that Healthy Start would like to develop an assessment tool that not only looks at language development, cognitive and general knowledge, and social and emotional development, but at the family environment surrounding that child.

Through this research, two evaluation goals for the summer program were developed: 1) Child Domains: assess physical development, fine and gross motor skills, social emotional development, approaches to learning, and language/communication; and 2) Family Domains: knowledge of and comfort in interacting with the educational system, areas of concern for the parents, and what areas families would like help with in assisting their child at home.

Eight schools in Santa Barbara participated in the program; a total of 249 preschoolers, ages 4-6, were served. Teachers completed questionnaires on all 249 preschoolers during the first and last weeks of the program (See Appendix A for questionnaire). Parents were also asked to complete a family questionnaire (measuring family domains) (See Appendix B for questionnaire). Questionnaire responses yielded the following results:

- Teachers observed improvement in the children on every question.
- 55.5% of the parents indicate that they “Did not know who could help them find services for their child/family.”
- Over 73% of parents noted that they would like assistance to help their child at home with different areas listed on the questionnaire
- 50% of parents have not met or talked to their child’s teacher.

### **California School Age Families Education program (CAL-SAFE)**

Funded by the CDE, CAL-SAFE enables teen parents to continue their education while concurrently receiving quality childcare, health and social services, counseling, vocational counseling, and academic tutoring. All students under the age of 19 whom are pregnant or parenting students of Santa Barbara School District qualify for the program. Students who are attending Alternative High Schools or participating in Independent Study Programs also qualify.

The amount of funding they receive is based on the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of the mother, biological father, as well as the child’s attendance at childcare. Last year’s reimbursement was \$ 90,000.00 for student services and \$ 235,000.00 for infant and toddler services. Prop 10 funds the salary of a Family Advocate that works at the CAL-SAFE centers.

The CAL-SAFE center at Santa Barbara High school has 1 head teacher, 2 additional teachers and 1 assistant. The Family Advocates work to mediate between teen parents and teachers. If issues arise, they are there to help both sides communicate and address the problem. In addition, they make transitions smoother for teen parents by actively

helping them locate what program they will move to once they have completed high school. Because of the efforts of the Family Advocates, teen parents who leave CAL-SAFE will have already met the new service provider they will be working with.

Last year, a 100% of the students involved in the San Marcos CAL-SAFE program graduated from high school. In addition, 100% of the students who graduated were assisted in enrolling at the local junior college.

### **Lessons Learned-Keys to Success**

- *Leadership is vital to the successful planning and development of school readiness efforts.* In Santa Barbara County there were a number of key individuals who provided essential leadership. For example, active leadership came from the chair of the Commission, a member of the Board of Supervisors, the County Superintendent of Schools, and the Superintendent of Santa Barbara Unified School District, Superintendent of Guadalupe Unified School District, and Healthy Start directors.
- *Proposition 10 funding should provide “gap” money to supplement and initiate other funding resources and leverage existing infrastructures.* The Proposition 10 resources were effectively utilized within the Healthy Start program paying for direct service staff and services rather than indirect overhead costs.
- *Creating an active and high level “buy-in” from parents and the community is vital to effective services.* The Commission has conducted “Community Conversations” in communities throughout the county to solicit ideas from community members regarding program needs. The Commission organized meetings with parents and other community members at places and times that were most convenient for them. For example, they decided to hold one of the “Community Conversations” on Sunday after mass, because that was a time that most members of that community could meet.
- *Involving fathers in the early development of their children is important to a child’s success.* Efforts have been made at the planning and program delivery level to recognize the important role of fathers. The WEB program has articulated the inclusion of fathers as partners with mothers or as single parents in all aspects of the program. At the Los Prietos juvenile camp, specific work on early childhood education and the role of fathers is being done with the male population, many of whom are fathers.
- *A systemic approach supports a long-range service delivery model.* In approaching school readiness, Santa Barbara has articulated that important activities must occur from the prenatal period to the time that a child enters school. This principle has had a significant impact on resource development, collaboration, and integration of services. From the WEB project, to Healthy Start, to programs aimed at smoothing the transition into Kindergarten, the Commission has developed a comprehensive approach to school readiness.

- *An evaluation model must be developed from the onset and must be usable by providers with varied skill and resource sets.* Before the first request for proposals were released, initial work on evaluation had been initiated. This process has evolved into one on one encounters with providers to assist them with the evaluation process. For many providers this is their first encounter with results accountability. Coaching through the process has proved highly beneficial.
- *It is important to work closely with schools-at the administrative and teaching levels-to identify and develop common goals and values is essential in order to create a viable partnership.* By establishing a common working platform, systems that facilitate the transition from preschool (or no early childhood education experience) into Kindergarten can be successfully implemented. Recognizing the importance of working directly with teachers, regular meetings between commission staff and kindergarten teachers to plan for the School Readiness initiative are being held.
- *Securing stable funding is an on-going challenge.* Building on Healthy Start has had numerous financial and programmatic advantages. However, in order to maintain their level of funding, staff spends an inordinate amount of time searching for and responding to grant funds. With Proposition 10 being a diminishing resource, sustaining service levels may add to the current funding challenge.
- *Finding qualified parent educators who are culturally and linguistically competent is important and challenging.* Finding a bilingual and culturally competent parent educator will be a challenge for many communities. Counties may have to build capacity by partnering with child development/educational professionals to train community members, including teachers, parents, or advocates.

## Conclusion

Santa Barbara Children and Families Commission has developed a comprehensive, community driven School Readiness initiative. They have built upon existing community infrastructures and collaboratives and will expand services and programs according to the needs identified by different community members. Their emphasis is on carefully planning School Readiness efforts that will be sustainable and have very strong community buy-in.

## YUBA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

### Background

Yuba is a rural county located in Northern California on the western slopes of the Sierra Mountains. The county has a population of approximately 63,000 people who live in two incorporated cities and thirteen unincorporated communities. There are 36 schools in the county that serve a total of 13,547 students. Marysville Joint Unified is the largest district, with 23 schools and 10,073 students. There are two districts that have less than a hundred students total- demonstrating the rural and isolated quality of parts of the county. Sixty percent of the population is Caucasian, 18% is East Asian (primarily Hmong), 17% are Hispanic, 3% are African-Americans and 1% are Native American. Of the total population, approximately 6,800 are children between the ages of 0 to 5.

County demographics illustrate the significant economic and social challenges confronting Yuba. Yuba is the second poorest county in California, with one of the highest childhood poverty rates and adult unemployment rates in the state. Fifty-nine percent of students in Yuba qualify for free or reduced lunch. Over 29% of 0 to 4 year-old children in the county live in families with incomes below the federal poverty line. In fact, approximately one third of all families receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). For every five children that need childcare, there is only one licensed childcare slot available.

Yuba County's strategic plan places significant emphasis on strengthening families as a means of supporting children's growth and development. The plan includes the following strategies and objectives to meet the needs of children and families living in the county:

- provide families that may be "at risk" with in-home support services and easy access to Family Resource Centers (FRC) by increasing the number of public health nurses out-stationed at FRC's;
- establish FRC's and parent education programs accessible to parents with young children residing in high risk neighborhoods; ensure that these FRCs are properly located, that they are culturally competent, and that they provide sufficient transportation resources;
- increase the quality of exempt childcare providers by offering training, incentive stipends, and technical support; and
- provide childcare for ill children, teen parents, and children with disabilities.

### Yuba County's Approach to School Readiness

The Commission views Family Resource Centers as the best platforms for addressing School Readiness. Because Yuba County will only get \$100,000 a year in School Readiness funding, it was important that they chose an approach to School Readiness that would maximize the resources available to them. By using existing community

infrastructure, such as the five Family Resource Centers already established in the county, they will be able to focus resources on sustaining an important community asset while concurrently providing additional needed services.

For rural counties like Yuba, there are so few children that it is important to develop partnerships to both secure funding and to avoid duplicating and increasing the types of services and resources available. In choosing to work with Family Resource Centers as a delivery platform for School Readiness, the Commission is becoming more involved with the collaboratives that contributed to the development of the Centers. In fact, one of Yuba County's strengths is that they have a significant history of collaboration and integration; following are three collaboratives that are involved with Family Resource Centers, and School Readiness more broadly:

- *The Yuba Collaborative for Healthy Children*, which was established in 1991, was originally called Yuba County Coordinated Services. At the time of its inception, membership included representatives from social services, health services, probation, education, domestic violence program, and substance abuse treatment. In 1995, as a result of the "Communities Planning for Family Preservation" initiative, the group was expanded to include community representatives, parents, and consumers.
- *Yuba Childcare Planning Council* has been in operation for 7 years and is a well-established entity in the county. The Yuba Child Care Planning Council is a countywide board responsible for developing priorities and planning for child care. Members are appointed by the county superintendent and the board of supervisors. Typically, the Council has representatives that are child care providers, agencies or businesses that provide private funding for childcare, city, county, or local education agencies, as well as community consumers of child care services.
- *Yuba County Children's Council* was originally formed in 1991, but became inactive for a period of nine years. The council was re-established a year and a half ago and is gaining momentum. Currently, they are reaching out to teachers, schools, county agencies, and others to start conversations about different issues. As part of these efforts, they are putting together a Children's Report Card, which has involved interviewing preschool and kindergarten teachers and will be expanded to include other community voices.

### **Yuba County School Readiness Projects**

Through its strong interagency relationships, the Commission has secured active partners in supporting the goals related to Family Resource Centers. For example, Yuba County Human Service Agency is releasing a total of \$750,000 in CalWorks money to encourage communities to develop Family Resource Centers. The funding is intended to be "seed" money to develop centers. Mike Noda, the director of the agency, said "we want to do it

(establish FRCs) neighborhood by neighborhood. We are looking at it from a neighborhood perspective.”

Currently there are 5 Family Resource Centers in Yuba that include both school and community-based models. These sites include former Healthy Start programs, a site that is operated through the Yuba County Special Education Office; and others that receive ABC funds (described in more detail below). These Centers have been in operation from between 2 and 8 years. Following is a list of all five centers: Challenge Family Resource Center; Cedarlane Parents Center/ Family Resource Center; Camptonville Wellness Center/ Family Resource Center; Yuba County Family Resource Center; and the Olivehurst Family Resource Center, which is described below.

### **Oliverhurst Family Resource Center: a Cal-SAHF Answers Benefiting Children (ABC) Center**

Oliverhurst Family Resource Center is a California Safe and Healthy Families (Cal-SAHF) Resource Center. The center targets families with children under the age of 5 who want support services. The model is built on home visitation and focuses on “over burdened” families by supporting them in improving their health, social and economic status. Included as part of the array of services is home visitation, health care information, safety information, parent education, support groups, information and referral and counseling for families with children who have been abused.

The Cal-SAHF model encourages services to reflect the needs of the community it serves. For example, the center offers twelve step meetings and anger management groups because there is a significant need for them in the community. The center also provides a safe place in the community for families to come together for support, socialization and fun. Parent/child play groups, family outings, and activities for siblings are among the many family oriented activities.

A team leader, home visitor(s), early childhood development specialist, nurse, mental health counselor, child abuse counselor and program coordinator staff ABC. The center staff and its programs are tightly connected to local medical services, schools and child protective services.

Cal-SAHF has instituted a formal evaluation process that focuses on family functioning outcomes. Family assessments are completed every 6 months. The assessments measure positive parenting and child rearing attitudes, depression, social supports, drug and alcohol abuse/use, and conflict/anger management skills.

Funding for Oliverhurst Family Resource Center totals approximately \$260,000 a year. The Department of Social Services' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) and the Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) provide the majority of funding. In fact, they blended funds in an effort to provide more comprehensive services, as OCAP focuses on young children while OCJP focuses on adults. Yuba County Human Service Agency has also provided substantial funding. They provide: space for the Olivehurst Family



Resource Center, the salary for the Olivehurst coordinator, salary for a full time social worker as well as the salary for a part time nurse. The Probation Department has provided part time staff. CalWorks funds a therapist that had previously been funded through the OCJP. Currently, Olivehurst Family Resource Center is applying for Prop 10 funding to fill the missing pieces, which are: additional home visitors and additional administrative assistance.

Long-term financial sustainability will be accomplished through combining support from CalWorks, Prop 10, grants, and continued in-kind support.

### **Other School Readiness Activities**

Yuba County Public Library, in partnership with Prop 10 State Commission and Yuba County Children and Families Commission, recently purchased and staffed a Literacy Van. The Van is a large school bus that has been customized to have bookshelves, computers, and an area where dental hygiene can be taught. The Literacy Van visits preschools, schools and neighborhoods in both Yuba and Sutter County. During the visits, they give away books, read stories and assist children and their families in increasing literacy skills. Although the targeted age group is children under the age of five, the Literacy Van welcomes the families and siblings of the targeted children thus making services open to a greater population. The van has been giving away approximately 250 books a month for children and their families to take home to create their own "libraries."

### **Lessons Learned/Key Challenges**

- *Addressing children and families living in "border-line" poverty is an important piece of the puzzle.* One of the Commission's challenges is to create opportunities for children that do not qualify for subsidized childcare slots or other state and federal programs. A school district in Yuba is considering offering land/facilities to childcare providers with the agreement that childcare providers would charge families less for services. The Commission is very concerned with childcare, and has consequently allotted \$ 85,000.00 to childcare programs/efforts.
- *Yuba County Human Service Agency (YCHSA) has historically not been focussed on prevention but is changing that in response to greater awareness of its importance.* In the past, YCHSA has been primarily concerned with responding to child abuse allegations. However, through CalWorks funding, they have shifted their focus to include prevention strategies. This shift in philosophy has had major programmatic and financial implications for the county. By partnering with Family Resource Centers they have altered their service model by expanding their target populations to include families with young children, out-stationing staff, and providing "seed" money to establish new centers.
- *The Commission has attached its efforts to the work of existing community collaboratives, stimulating discussions that get to the root of philosophical*

*differences between schools and early childhood education providers.* Proposition 10's focus on School Readiness has stimulated challenging philosophical and policy discussions. Funding Family Resource Centers on school sites with Proposition 10 funds has opened up many issues for schools as well as early childhood educators. The pressure on the schools to produce improving academic scores- and the corresponding financial incentives to schools and teachers if scores are improved- poses the risk of creating conflict with early childhood educators, who typically advocate a more comprehensive approach to child development. The challenge is for schools, early childhood educators, and other community members to adopt a common understanding of school readiness.

- *Members of the early education community, although supportive of locating Family Resource Centers and early education activities on school campuses, are concerned that being on school grounds and operating within the structure of schools could put preschool curriculums at risk because of pressure to focus on test based skills.*
- *Community leadership to facilitate integration is vital to building a sustainable system.* The county has a strong history of collaboration at the service level. This has been less evident at the executive level. Yuba County Children's Council has existed since 1991, but became inactive for many years. Recently the council has been working on redefining its role. It is considering recommending to the Board of Supervisors that it be used to analyze and recommend policy and programmatic issues to the board. The Commission has representation on the council and it provides access to a broader community audience for Proposition 10 issues.
- *As part of its strategic plan, the Commission has identified the need for a resource coordinator and grant writer to bring existing and underutilized funding streams together to support a holistic approach to School Readiness.* The coordinator will assist programs with collaborating, resource development as well as utilizing the multi-agency approach to seeking new funding.
- *People wear multiple "hats" in rural communities, which is both an asset and a potential challenge.* With a significant emphasis on collaboration in rural counties, a single person can have a disproportionate influence on an issue or on the overall functioning of the group itself. It is recognized that special attention needs to take place regarding governance, process and membership in order to create an inclusive structure.
- *The Commission recognizes the impact that poverty and a chaotic home environment plays on a child's success in school as well as their physical and emotional health.* Drug abuse is a major confounding factor in the Yuba County that exacerbates already difficult conditions for many children. The Family Resource Center model has been a successful initial step to address this problem, as it provides a place for 12 step meetings and other needed services. The long-term strategy should be to expand these centers to parts of the county that are culturally or geographically isolated.

- *With many families being isolated geographically and with the high levels of poverty, the literacy van has quickly become an important new community resource.* However, the funding from the State Commission will only cover operational costs for four months. A significant challenge for the Commission will be to develop a long-term funding plan for the van.

## **Conclusion**

Yuba County Children and Families Commission is turning to already existing collaboratives and Family Resource Centers to address School Readiness. They will provide needed funding to keep these FRCs going as well as enable them to add needed services. The Commission is not only increasing integration and collaboration of services by doing this, but also maximizing the effectiveness of the funding available to them for School Readiness efforts.

### SECTION III: COUNTY PROFILES

CHCFC staff compiled a one-page summary of current School Readiness activities for the 52 County Commissions that agreed to participate in interviews between June and August 2001. The information that is presented in the summaries is based on the topics addressed by the interview questions. The topics include: the counties' initial responses to the School Readiness Initiative; counties' stated strengths and needs; the existence of a School Readiness model; School Readiness activities that are currently funded, or are scheduled to be funded; program evaluation; and future challenges and opportunities as identified by local Executive Directors.

It is important to note that the information included in these summaries is based only on the counties self-reported responses. At no point was an evaluation of the counties performed by CHCFC, or any other parties. Variation in the amount of information presented in the summaries is not intended to function as an evaluative measure of county efforts. CHCFC staff conducted interviews over a ten week period; this information is simply a reflection of how far along in the process of developing the initiative each county was at the time of their scheduled interview. Those counties already funding projects that are based on a model had much more information to provide than those counties that are in their initial planning stages. Interviews with the Executive Directors reveal that many counties are just beginning their first funding cycle. Thus, had the interviews been performed 2 months later, these county representatives would have more information and details to offer.

## ALAMEDA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Mark Friedman, Executive Director  
1850 Fairway Drive  
San Leandro, CA 94557  
(510) 667-7575

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 335  
Enrollment: 218,992  
30.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Overall, the Commissions initial response was positive. The Commission said that in many ways they are already doing everything defined under School Readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The biggest strength is that the schools are ready to take on School Readiness activities.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** They have 47 low performing schools. In addition, there is a large need for helping children overcome both economic and language barriers.
- **School Readiness Model:** Alameda is using a collaboration model between multiple school districts. In addition, they are developing a model that incorporates a 6week summer program for children who will be entering kindergarten. The program includes parent classes on health, social services, and insurance. They also want to assess parents before and after the school year.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** There are two School Readiness pilot projects currently underway in two school districts.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** An evaluation system is currently being designed. The Commission may use aspects of the High Scope model for their evaluation component.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The biggest challenge facing Alameda County is the large number of low performing schools. This makes it difficult to focus on programs to serve all the children in the county. In addition, they have found it a challenge to develop the necessary infrastructure for School Readiness.

The opportunities in the County are that there has already been some effort underway toward preschool child development. In addition, the feeling is that most people recognize the need to make things better for young children. The hope is that the School Readiness funds will allow them to be more proactive in their programming and to “stop always playing catch-up with the kids.”

## ALPINE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interviewees:**

Judy Martin, Executive Director  
Commissioner  
Cheri Warrell, Commissioner  
75-B Diamond Valley Road  
Markleeville, CA 96120  
(530) 694-2771

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 8 Julianne Harris,  
Enrollment: 150  
49.3% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission felt that their activities already addressed many of the components outlined in the School Readiness Initiative.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Alpine is a very small county, which the Commission views as a strength. The resources that exist are easily accessible, and the Commission has the support of the Superintendent.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission has identified several community needs. Early childcare providers need to travel long distances and there is a lack of public transportation throughout the county. In addition, they do not have a continuum of health care in Alpine. There is no prenatal, pediatric, or dental care in the county. They have found it difficult to get federal and state funding, and there is limited Internet access in the community.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Prop 10 Commission does not have an articulated model for School Readiness at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Some of the activities the Commission has been involved in include: public health outreach, providing dental care, a Heads-Up Reading Program, producing kindergarten guidelines, providing transportation, and tutoring for Pre-K.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** There is no system of evaluation in place as of yet.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

There are many challenges facing Alpine County in their School Readiness efforts. These include: lack of transportation, a need for trained providers, lack of prenatal care, difficulty accessing technical assistance, lack of available medical/dental care, geographic isolation, and lack of funding. However, the Commission does see an opportunity in the fact that they have a single school district that is highly supportive of their efforts.

## AMADOR COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 7, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Sara McClelland, Executive Director  
1003 Broadway  
Jackson, CA 95642  
(209) 223-6550

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 16  
Enrollment: 5,526  
23.7% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission felt that the initiative was just a renaming of what they set out to do in the beginning. There were also some concerns about moving towards standardized testing and moving from a focus on the early childhood population to kindergarten.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The main community strength identified by the Commission is the amount of successful collaboration that is currently taking place through out the county.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission conducted a needs assessment and found that childcare is important and identified many School Readiness related issues including: parenting, domestic violence, and health.
- **School Readiness Model:** There is no current model for School Readiness in the county.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** No specific activities identified as School Readiness were outlined during the interview.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At this time, the Commission does not an evaluation system in place for School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

There were several challenges identified by the Commission. The first was the problem of Prop 10 being seen as yet another bureaucratic system. In addition, there is a fair amount of isolation and home schooling in Amador County. Lack of time was also mentioned as a challenge to developing School Readiness projects. Amador is a small, rural community, which means that the same people are often times doing the majority of the work. Finally, the Commission feels that School Readiness needs to be seen as an extension of the projects/programs currently underway.

The opportunity is that the Commission can use this initiative as a push to increase communication and it gives legitimacy to working with schools.

## BUTTE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Cheryl Giscombe, Executive Director  
Linda Moore, Commissioner  
Marian Gage, Commissioner  
18 County Center Drive, Ste. B  
Oroville, CA 95965  
(530) 538-6464

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 87  
Enrollment: 34,433  
44.4% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The initial response of the Commission was to express concern about the perception that the State Commission is driving the focus and direction of the County Commissions. There was also some concern about how this initiative will affect private schools. In addition, the Commission feels strongly that School Readiness should include social readiness as well as academic readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There are three advisory groups that are well established in the community and will support School Readiness efforts. These advisory groups are the Local Childcare Planning Council, Child Abuse Prevention Council, and Children's Services. The Prop 10 Commission has a link with these groups by having commissioners who act as advisors. In addition to the link with these three groups, the Commission attends meetings with the County Office of Education and the Tobacco Prevention Council.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** They are still in the process of identifying specific community needs as they relate to School Readiness
- **School Readiness Model:** There is no established model at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** One of the goals of the Commission is to have children "ready to learn." Many of the projects the Commission is supporting indirectly relate to School Readiness but don't use that terminology. They haven't funded any projects specifically addressing School Readiness, but are currently working on the retention of preschool teachers.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At this time there is no evaluation system set up for School Readiness, as they are still in the planning process.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The school district is currently overwhelmed with accountability. There is some good collaboration taking place, but it will need to be improved. More specifically, the Commission feels that it would be beneficial for the K-12 system to collaborate more with the 0-5 year old providers. The Commission believes that there is an opportunity to build on the school districts need to raise API scores. There is a strong willingness on the part of the Prop 10 Commission to build on the capacity of existing infrastructures to make the link between K-12 providers and 0-5 providers more seamless.



## CALAVERAS COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 7, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Linda Perry, Executive Director  
John Brophy, County Superintendent  
Janet Orvis-Cook, Commission Vice Chair  
891 Mountain Ranch Rd.  
San Andreas, CA 95245  
(209) 286-6460

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 27  
Enrollment: 6,967  
29.1% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Calaveras County Executive Director was at the meeting in San Diego when the School Readiness idea was introduced. Initially they were very excited about the opportunity to partner with other organizations. Their concern is not to make School Readiness such a priority that other areas would suffer. The Commission also questioned why, if there is so much money for low-performing schools in the Governor's budget, is Prop 10 focusing on this too? By designating only low-performing schools, others lose out. Although they do not have low-performing schools, their children still have important needs. The Commission knows that their schools aren't performing low now, but they see it on the horizon.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Calaveras County has already developed collaborative relationships that can be expanded to meet additional community needs. There is also a strong community base consisting of private providers and parents that are supportive of Prop 10 projects.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission has annual meetings with community organizations, parents, and other groups focusing on School Readiness as well as other areas of interest. Through focus groups, Prop 10 learned that the community wanted School Readiness efforts begin at the prenatal stage. As a county they are focussing on the big picture to guide them in the development of various projects. There are 12-17 counties that won't qualify for School Readiness money. The Calaveras Prop 10 Commission suggested that the State Commission consider pilots in the communities that don't qualify for School Readiness money. The idea would be to set expectations and goals for counties that do not qualify for School Readiness funds and compare them to those that do.
- **School Readiness Model:** The County does not have a comprehensive model at this time; however, they have developed some pilots and are looking at different elements that could be incorporated into a School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** At the time of the interview there were no specific activities identified as School Readiness efforts.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The Commission did not have an evaluation system in place at the time of the interview.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Challenges for Calaveras County include funding and the desire to be comprehensive in the face of territoriality. The interviewees also noted that rural counties have no economic base or industry from which they can request funding for pilots. There have also been some issues around the duplication of services. More specifically, the County Office of Education gets frustrated when the Federal Government puts out a grant (such as Community Learning Centers) that will compete with after school activities provided by the school who has to charge families, while the grant funded program will be free.

Opportunities in the County include strong partnerships. In rural counties school districts don't have enough children so they are banding together. The urban model doesn't work – with the geographic spread you need more sites and directors to serve the same amount of children.

## COLUSA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Charlotte Lauppe, Executive Director  
Kay Spurgeon, Superintendent of Schools  
P.O. Box 367  
Williams, CA 95987  
(530) 473-3927 ext. 200

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 20  
Enrollment: 4,275  
64.6% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The initial response was that this is where they have been since 1998. Colusa County's strategic plan focuses on using early intervention to get kids ready for kindergarten. They have not labeled it as School Readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The County Office of Education has a core group comprised of Social Services, Public Health, the Library Literacy Program, the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Probation, and WIA (Work Investment Act). This collaborative was together before Prop 10 was established. Prop 10 is already meeting with the collaborative to discuss various projects. Another asset to the community is that there is strong volunteerism and the businesses through out the county are supportive.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Colusa County has high unemployment and a large Hispanic population. They conducted a community needs assessment. Head Start does a survey every year, as well as the Healthy Start evaluation. There have been similar community meetings for over 30 years.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission's School Readiness models are in the development stage.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission has funded training and stipends for family child care providers, health related programs through the Health Department, and a Library project for outreach for family literacy with dental, health, and speech services to be added later. They have not labeled projects as School Readiness. Currently funded projects prepare parents to be their child's first teacher through classes, trainings, and interventions that aim to detect problems early on. Two home visiting programs will be funded. One program will have services similar to Head Start but will not have the same income guidelines. Through this program they would like to serve families who do not meet the required income guidelines for Head Start. The other home visiting program, run through the Department of Health, will focus on first time parents. The overall goal of the intervention is to improve parenting skills as well as promoting education and training that can help change the life goals of the parent. As a Commission they feel that it is important to blend and weave programs so that services are not the same. There are also two WIA one-stops that offer a lot of services. There are many partners involved, which has resulted in them functioning somewhat like a Family Resource Center. The focus is on the families.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** There is nothing currently planned. The Executive Director feels that, as a rural county, they are pretty progressive. If they could do an evaluation it would show that they have done pretty good things. As a Class 7 (smallest) County, Colusa has a range of services comparable to Class 4. Economies of scale are a factor. There are some very strong and interesting things going on. There is concern about the urban v. rural struggle – as a rural county they have had urban models forced on them. The most effective approach will be by people who know the community best.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Challenges include transportation, limited resources, and issues related to being a rural county.

There is a monthly inter-agency Children's Council that is a coordinating group for the county department chairs. They are working on putting together a uniform database to decrease duplication of services and filter all information through one place. The database will also enable different groups to access information and keep it up to date. Prop 10 provides the opportunity to make sure that everyone is on the same page, needed information is gathered, and necessary structures are developed. Having a small population to work with is an asset, because deep relationships have developed and there is good support and buy-in from all departments. In addition, the small size of the agencies means that you know who to contact – usually only one person. Finally, there is a strong community spirit that is often times unique to small counties.

## CONTRA COSTA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewee:**

Brenda Blasingame, Executive Director  
Maria Teresa, Commissioner  
Susan Wittenberg, Commissioner  
1340 Arnold Drive, Ste. 125  
Martinez, CA 94553  
(925) 335-9991

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 239  
Enrollment: 159,714  
26.6% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission had a mixed response to School Readiness initiative. They are interested in supporting School Readiness, but have a few concerns. They feel that the level of local control has to be broad, as there are many structures already existing in the community. In other words, there needs to be community ownership and governance of School Readiness projects. The Commission also feels strongly that School Readiness should not only focus on academic achievement as measure by testing, but on other indicators of readiness to learn such as the child's health as well as social and emotional development. In addition, they voiced some concern about the fact that the State Commissions paper seemed to emphasized school based school readiness projects. Their concern is due to the fact it may be difficult to find available space in schools or on school grounds for School Readiness centers. The Commission is looking at the possibilities for School Readiness in their county and is excited about the opportunities the new funding will provide.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There is a well-established After School Task Force in which 20 school districts participate. They are considering developing a sub-group that deals specifically with 0-5 year old children. In addition to school districts the County Office of Education, Private Day Care Centers, County Department of Health and Human Services, the Faith Community, and others participate in the After School Task Force. This group has the potential to contribute substantially to School Readiness efforts in the county.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** There is a need and desire for parental involvement and inclusion in community projects, including School Readiness.
- **School Readiness Model:** There is no School Readiness model at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Due to the fact that School Readiness was the overarching goal of the Commission many of the projects they are funding address School Readiness but are not specifically identified that way.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The Commission evaluates its projects differently depending on what community they are in. There are 10 neighborhoods in which there are differing needs and consequently different projects taking place. They plan on establishing baseline indicators for each neighborhood and evaluating their projects using those baseline indicators. These baseline indicators are still in the process of being identified.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

The school district is currently going through a very elaborate strategic planning process. This will provide opportunities for School Readiness projects as well as collaboration with Prop 10 commission. They have already experimented with integrating welfare funds to provide after school programs and feel that this will contribute positively to other efforts, such as those related to School Readiness. In addition, the county has an extensive history of collaboration between Community Based Organizations and the K-12 providers.

## DEL NORTE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 27, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Patricia Vernelson, Executive Director  
Chris McCollum, Commissioner  
Mike Miller, Commissioner  
Phil Freneau, Commissioner  
555 H Street  
Crescent City, CA 95531  
(707) 464-7291

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 14  
Enrollment: 4,834  
60.6% Free or Reduced Lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission felt that just about all of their activities are geared toward getting kids ready for school. They expressed concern over what they saw as a vague definition of School Readiness from the state; they were afraid this would lead to more testing. They believe there should be a system approach rather than an individual child approach. The Commission is not sure that they will qualify for any School Readiness funds. They believe the money should be divided based on the number of children in the county, not on the number of under-performing schools. They are concerned that the schools that already get money from the State and Healthy Start will be the ones getting the new funds. In addition, they feel that the amount of funding for small counties is too small to have an effect.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** In Del Norte, strong partnerships also exist around the areas discussed in School Readiness. In addition, the Commission stated that they couldn't afford not to work with each other.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The biggest need identified was funding. Del Norte only receives \$300,000 from the State Prop 10 Commission each year. The county has very little tax base and is very impoverished.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission is operating under a Family Resource Center model, in collaboration with the local community college, hospital, and the County Department of Public Health.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Currently, the Commission is funding some reading programs such as Literacy, Library, and Books (LAB), as well as a Mobile Learning Unit. They are looking into projects dealing with retention of quality childcare, and are planning a Family Wellness Center in collaboration with their Family Resource Center.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** The Commission does not have an evaluation plan in place at this time.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Challenges faced by Del Norte are the general lack of resources, its geographic isolation, poverty, and lack of public transportation. However, the Commission has identified several areas

as opportunities for addressing School Readiness. They have community buy-in, as well as an already existing system of integrated and centralized services. This centralized system can be used as a base from which to develop other services, such as those relating to School Readiness. People with ideas and resources are beginning to form collaborations. In addition, a tremendous amount of community input and asset mapping has gone into their strategic plan, which is creating a good starting point.



## EL DORADO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 5, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director  
4111 Creekside Drive, Suite B  
Shingle Springs, CA 95682  
(530) 672-8298

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 62  
Enrollment: 28,795  
20.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The response was mixed. Each Commissioner has a different definition of what School Readiness means. And the Commission does feel that it is critical that all groups can participate in the design so that the School Readiness initiative will reach all parts of the county.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** El Dorado County is eligible to participate in the School Readiness process as one school qualifies. The Commission will have to begin to communicate with this community and other organizations to understand the issues that the community faces and how we can support changes they feel are important.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** There are two critical areas: transportation and access to services. Within the community a large and growing population is the Latino Community. It will be critical for the Commission to understand the issues that face the families, how we can support initiatives with other groups to make community improvements, and hopefully have service agencies communicate effectively with each other.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission has not had in-depth discussions regarding a defined model, although School Readiness is the essence of their Strategic Plan.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** El Dorado is just completing their first round of funding and will embark on round two, which will be completed by September. One of their first funding grantees focuses on the development of a Family Resource Center and activities related to School Readiness. The Commission thinks that they may see more of these types of applications in their next funding cycle.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

One of the primary challenges is getting people together. The Community Based Organizations are very concerned about how Prop 10 will affect them. More specifically, what role will they have? And what impact will Prop 10 have on their programs? Another challenge is how to implement standards so that programs are of high quality.

The opportunity is to get everyone to participate and have a broad base that is very strong and encourages new avenues of positive communication.

## FRESNO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 27, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Steve Gordon, Executive Director  
550 East Shaw # 215  
Fresno, CA 93710  
(559) 241-6515

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 292  
Enrollment: 181,110  
61.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

At the time of the interview, the entire Commission had not had time to meet and discuss School Readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Fresno has a very good core of dedicated early childhood workers. In addition, there is an already existing inter-agency council, which addresses the needs of 0-18 year olds.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Fresno has been designated as one of the worst counties based on API scores. There are significant challenges due to language barriers and cultural issues. The County is also divided between rural and urban areas, which have differing needs.
- **School Readiness Model:** The County is working on a School Readiness model at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** At this point they have funded several school districts to implement preschool programs aimed at creating a continuum of education for young children.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** The commission has not settled on a method of evaluation.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The challenges facing Fresno stem mainly from the urban/rural split, and the large Hispanic population. The primary opportunity is that there is a general feeling that it is time to address the issues surrounding School Readiness.

## GLENN COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 28, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Joni Samples, Commissioner  
525 W. Sycamore Street  
Willows, CA 95988  
(530) 865-1145

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 30  
Enrollment: 6,167  
58.4% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission was not surprised at all. They felt it made sense, and had already included School Readiness in their plan to some extent.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Glenn is a small county that has a history of people collaborating to get things done. Most of the resources in the county are grant driven.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Glenn has a large population of working poor, and they feel that many of the children are not ready for school due to lack of language and socialization skills. In addition, they have a new large Hmong population that they have yet to address the needs of.
- **School Readiness Model:** Glenn County does not have a guiding model at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission is not currently funding School Readiness activities. However, there is activity ongoing in the county funded by separate community agencies.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** The Commission has not discussed possible evaluation tools as of yet.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The biggest challenge facing Glenn County is the lack of funding, which forces them to work on a shoestring budget. They also feel that they have a particular challenge in reaching already disenfranchised populations. They think School Readiness will provide an opportunity to develop literacy programs for parents, which, in turn, will enable parents to help their children with reading skills.

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 13, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Wendy Rowan, Executive Director  
Nancy Frost, Commissioner  
Elaine Gray, Commissioner  
317 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Eureka, CA 95501  
(707) 445-6210

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 84  
Enrollment: 21,195  
38.6% Free or Reduced Lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commissions initial response was to feel circumspect over what the State Commission meant by School Readiness. They are concerned that whatever is done may not be sustainable, and that after two years the state could pull funding, thereby leaving the county to make due. However, they also see School Readiness as an opportunity to accomplish good work by bringing together child development practitioners, kindergarten teachers and others.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There was a large collaborative effort already underway before the creation of the Prop 10 Commission. This collaborative is the Association for Education of Young Children and includes representatives from the Family Childcare Association, Retention Program for Caregivers, Superintendents, Healthy Start, and Family Home Visitors. The Commission is working to build upon this group.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The two largest community needs identified by the Commission are the large number of children with no pre-school experience and the lack of transportation in the county.
- **School Readiness Model:** Currently the Commission does not have an articulated model, but they are planning on bringing some people together to begin outlining various possibilities.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission has just started to fund projects in the last six months, and they have yet to fund any large projects targeting school readiness, but they plan on releasing funding for Family Resource Centers next year.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** The Commission has not yet decided how they will be evaluating School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The first challenge identified by the Commission is how to define, measure, and evaluate all the aspects of School Readiness. Another challenge will be to strengthen the relationship between schools and pre-schools. In addition, the Commission voiced concern regarding the sustainability of School Readiness efforts as well as the retention of childcare providers. However, the Commission also noted that School Readiness provides an opportunity to build strong collaborative partnerships between early childhood providers and schools. They also see a great opportunity to work with the county library on programs that have the potential to improve literacy.

## IMPERIAL COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 7, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Johnathan McDannell, Executive Director  
940 West Main Street, Room 204-E  
El Centro, CA 92243  
(760) 339-4474

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 61  
Enrollment: 33,216  
68.6% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

They wanted to coordinate efforts and have School Readiness person based out of the County Office of Education. They are already doing Resource and Referral and SELPA.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The local school districts are now thinking about School Readiness. The "Ready, Set, Go" program has been implemented in two districts to focus on School Readiness.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Imperial County has high poverty, low literacy in children, and the need to increase after school enrollment. The County has 16 gangs and is on the drug corridor. Due to geographical isolation there is limited access to services, especially culturally sensitive services.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview there was no School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Imperial County's current projects focus on parent and family support. This focus has been addressed through the child care field – both family and center based, home visitation, and health and social services.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** There was no evaluation system outlined at the time of the interview.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Challenges include bringing relevant partners to the table, lack of a collaborative, lack of funding to support change, increasing parental involvement, and the recruitment and retention of qualified providers. Opportunity exists in the fact that there are a lot of innovative people in the educational system. In addition, the small size of the County will make it possible to implement literacy programs countywide.

## INYO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** August 2, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Jessica Seibel, Executive Director  
1351 Rocking West Drive  
Bishop, CA 93514  
(760) 872-0925

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 23  
Enrollment: 3,404  
30.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The entire Commission has not had an opportunity to discuss School Readiness yet. However, they feel strongly about the need for such efforts and are pleased to see certain elements included in the initiative.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There is a funded three-year program that connects each family with a newborn to a community agency that does well baby visits as well as home visits. Even Start is part of this collaborative.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The largest areas of need in Inyo County are due to its rural nature and large geographic area. There are many isolated communities and families that are very poor. In addition, transportation is a huge problem. The Commission feels there is a strong need to subsidize child care since many families do not have this option readily available. In addition, there is a lack of physicians and dentists in the county.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, Inyo had not identified a model for their School Readiness activities.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission is not currently funding any specific School Readiness projects, but they believe that many of the projects they are funding address areas that are key to School Readiness.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, Inyo had not identified a method for evaluating their School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission identified several challenges related to School Readiness efforts. These include: lack of staffing, the isolated nature of many of the families and communities in the county, lack of specialist in needed areas, and the difficulty in integrating services because of the rural nature of the county.

## KERN COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 13, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Steve Ladd, Executive Director  
Alexi Esparsu, Commissioner  
Leslie Bingam, Commissioner  
2724 L Street  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
(661) 328-8888

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 240  
Enrollment: 147,988  
57.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

They Commission felt that everything they are currently doing could be classified as School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The strengths identified by the Commission are the leadership and willingness on the part of the Commission to address School Readiness, the money available, and the fact that there are schools that are ready to participate.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The two major community needs identified were: the number of low performing schools and the lack of facilities.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, Kern County did not have a clearly articulated model for School Readiness efforts.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission has over 50 projects currently funded, and they believe most fit under the definition of School Readiness given by the State Commission. As an example, they are funding ongoing preschool programs as well as funding the building of new preschools and Family Resource Centers.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, the Commission had not identified a specific method for evaluating their School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission feels that one of their challenges is to find a model that works in rural areas. Kern County has one urban center, and many rural communities spread over the surrounding 800 miles. The Commission sees a strong opportunity to work with partners and other agencies to build on projects and efforts already taking place in various communities. The Commission feels that the collaborative nature already present in the county as well as the fact that some schools are heavily involved in these efforts will positively contribute School Readiness projects.

## KINGS COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 14, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Dorinda Ohnstad, Executive Chair  
Alene Taylor, Commission Chair  
1400 W. Lacey Blvd.  
Hanford, CA 93230  
(559) 582-3211

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 53  
Enrollment: 25,364  
55.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

There was initial confusion as to what was meant by School Readiness. However, after attending a state conference, the Commission felt they had a much better understanding of what was meant. They felt that their Community Resource Center projects fit well.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The largest strength identified across the county is the desire of community members to be involved and play a key role in the planning process.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission identified several areas that point towards a need for School Readiness. These include: language barriers, technical assistance needs, health needs, access to health care, lack of mobility of the population, poor nutrition, domestic violence, and literacy issues.
- **School Readiness Model:** At this time they do not have a model, but they are hoping that the community will collaborate with them to determine which model should be used. They feel that community participation in this planning process is imperative.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The biggest activity that the Commission is involved in regarding School Readiness is the funding of up to ten Family Resource Centers spread strategically around the county.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, they had not chosen a specific evaluation method, but they plan on tracking the long-term effects of their projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The primary challenges identified were: addressing cultural barriers, lack of accessibility to services currently provided, lack of technical capacity to leverage funds, and overall lack of resources in the community. The Commission sees a huge opportunity to provide technical assistance to already existing programs and to help people apply for additional funding.



## LAKE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 15, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Susan Jen, Executive Director  
Susan Berry, Co-Executive Director  
Randy Thomas, Co-Executive Director  
Christ Thomas, Assistant Superintendent  
Peggy McLadd, Chair of Commission  
55 1<sup>st</sup> Box K  
Lakeport, CA 95453  
(707) 263-6169

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 34  
Enrollment: 10,163  
51.3% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Lake County appreciates the opportunity for an increase in funding and collaboration with school districts as a result of the School Readiness initiative. The Commission and its stakeholders are somewhat concerned that the School Readiness initiative may pre-empt some of the projects that they are currently working on. They would also like to have more detailed information on what requirements School Readiness funds will have.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There is enthusiasm and support within the school districts. The Healthy Start collaborative is providing a solid base from which to develop other programs, including those related to School Readiness. In addition, Lake County has a strong partnership in place between the Commission and Lake County Office of Education. Another community strength is that county childcare specialists have been working to train and retain early childhood educators, which will positively contribute to School Readiness efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** In some of the counties elementary schools 80-90% of the children qualify for free or reduced lunch. Many parents are struggling with literacy issues of their own and are having difficulty managing their lives. There is a need for parent education and support to address these issues. In addition, there is a shortage of early childhood education and full day childcare (wrap around services). Currently early childhood education is only available to 29% of the children in the county due to lack of available spaces. For infants and toddlers there is an even greater shortage of available programs. Finally, transportation to childcare and other services is a significant community need.
- **School Readiness Model:** The commission is working with the Lake County Office of Education, which has been in the process of developing a model for School Readiness. The goals of their current School Readiness model are to 1) increase Healthy Start services to meet the needs of 0-5 year old children; 2) link home visiting program to provision of center based childcare; and 3) make wrap around childcare services available at some preschools. The Commission is going to pilot certain programs to identify what works and doesn't work. From there they will further develop their School Readiness model.

- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commissions vision statement says that one of their goals is to have “all children to enter school ready to learn.” The elements of School Readiness are part of the projects they are funding but are not identified as being specifically for “School Readiness.” The Commissions goals are to 1) increase access to quality childcare; 2) increase access to parent education and support; and 3) increase preventative healthcare. Currently, the Lake County Office of Education administers a model program that provides home visitation, parent support groups, case management, and mental health services in small towns around Lake County. As much as possible, services from this program will be linked to participating School Readiness school sites, to make services more accessible to parents.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** There are several evaluation pieces already in place. The programs they plan on developing will use the evaluation systems that Healthy Start, preschools, and home visitation programs already have in place.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

The primary challenge will be to obtain sufficient funding. The secondary challenge is working with State agencies that are not flexible with their funding. The Commission feels that flexibility in funding for their 0-5 year old population is essential. Another challenge will be to make sure that School Readiness focus doesn't take away from the programs they are already running. The Commission wants to make sure families they serve know that School Readiness is not only about academics. Finally, the Commission feels that there is great opportunity for collaboration among their current partners.

## LASSEN COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 12, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Laura Roberts, Executive Director  
Barbara Malone, Commissioner  
1345 Paul Bunyan Rd. Ste. B  
Susanville, CA 96130  
(530) 257-9600 X 12

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 30  
Enrollment: 5,335  
33.0% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

At the time of the interview, they had not had a chance to get the opinions of the entire Commission.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There two established collaboratives that have done work in this area in the past. They are the local Childcare Planning Council, and the Strong Family Coalition.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The two biggest needs identified in the community are need for Family Resource Centers and an increase in childcare services.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, the Commission did not have a model for their School Readiness efforts.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** They have not funded anything specifically identified as School Readiness, but they feel that many of their projects address components of the issue. For example, they are working with a local non-profit to establish Family Resource Centers throughout the county. They are currently working with that grantee to incorporate the elements of the School Readiness initiative. The Commission is considering funding home visitation programs, parent education programs, early childcare programs, and childcare compensation and retention incentive programs.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, there was no evaluation system in place for School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission identified transportation, issues presented by inclement weather and the large geographic area covered in the county as challenges. The commission feels there is an interesting opportunity to partner with major employers such as the Department of Corrections, the Federal Government, and the Community College system.

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Dates:**

July 2, 2001: Evelyn Martinez

August 13, 2001: Neal Kaufman & Rose Kauffman

**Interviewees:**

Evelyn Martinez, Executive Director

Neil Kaufman, Commissioner

Rose Kauffman, Commissioner

333 S. Beaudry, Suite 2100

Los Angeles, CA 90017

(213) 482-6601

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 1,787

Enrollment: 1,681,787

60.5% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission is very supportive of School Readiness. They are looking forward to the State Commission making a final decision in July. There are some questions about how to implement the state's plan with county's plan for School Readiness. The Commission is happy that the State Prop 10 Commission is working in partnership with County Commissions to implement School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Prop 10 Commission, Healthy Start, Even Start, State Child Development Center funding, Pre-Kindegarten funding and the interest that different CBO's have in early childhood development and education are all community strengths. There is also a strong community interest in School Readiness. Finally, the County Office of Education is very supportive of School Readiness efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** There is a lack of a trained workforce in the area of early childhood. There is a need for space, especially because the school district does not have extra space for new programs. There is a need for an improvement in the administrative and organizational structure. There is a need to increase awareness of what services are available to young children and mothers. The Commission is also in the process of identifying additional community needs through a map and track project.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission is still reviewing different possibilities for their model. They may use one model or develop a hybrid of a few. The Commission feels that the model will change depending on what community they are talking about. In addition, they would like to build on the structures/models they already have in place. They also expressed that it is very important to them to encourage different ways of doing things rather than making it a mechanical model or system that does not take into account different factors. Furthermore, the Commission emphasized that it is important to them to look at the environment surrounding the child rather than only looking at providing services. For example, providing a safe park is as important as providing other services.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The over-arching goal in strategic plan is School Readiness. The Commission feels that everything they have done is for School Readiness. Currently there are three projects that relate to School Readiness: 1) preschool teacher training; 2) home visitation program; and 3) Family Resource Center/Family Literacy

Program. They plan on releasing a \$12 million RFP for Family Literacy Programs by November of 2001.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At this time there is no evaluation system in place for school readiness efforts.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

The opportunity for the Commission lies in the fact that people are excited about School Readiness. Funding enables them to get people together and motivated. The Commission also feels that School Readiness provides an opportunity to get people focussed on 0-5 year olds. In addition, measuring children's School Readiness over time (ages 1, 3, and 5, for example) will provide data that can then be used to develop better interventions and target certain problems from an earlier age. The primary challenge in Los Angeles County is the sheer number of under performing schools. The Commission will have to determine how to narrow their scope and identify which schools/locations will have School Readiness projects. They would also like to keep their focus on all children, but when it comes to School Readiness the state is giving them no choice but to focus on certain schools. Making families and the community as a whole feel more comfortable receiving services, especially from an agency affiliated with the government is also a challenge. Finally, systematic changes will be a challenge. The Commission expressed that in order to maintain a collaboration and structure you often need legislation to keep the system in place.

## MADERA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 12, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Chinayera Black, Executive Director  
Sally Frazier, Commissioner  
Dr. Cecelia Massetti  
14215 Road 28  
Madera, CA 93638  
(559) 675-7893 X 276

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 58  
Enrollment: 24,780  
61% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Everything the Commission has done can be labeled School Readiness. However, the Commission is more aware of it now that it is the new focus of the State Prop 10 Commission.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Having an interest in School Readiness and the fact that School Readiness sparks interest in schools are strengths. In addition, the Commission feels that another asset is the fact that existing services in the community have been identified.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Parents requesting services, such as childcare, health care, family support, and education.
- **School Readiness Model:** No School Readiness model is in place at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** There are no programs currently identified as School Readiness projects. However, they are developing a nurturing parent program, which indirectly relates to School Readiness.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** No evaluation system for School Readiness had been established at the time of the interview.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The new School Readiness focus was well received by the Commission and School Districts were delighted by the attention they are receiving. The over-arching challenge is that in order for School Readiness to work in the county it must be integrated into what is already going on. In addition, it is hard to focus solely on School Readiness, especially when some community agencies do not have a school focus at all.

## MARIN COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Gregory Fearon, Executive Director  
David Bonfilio, Commissioner  
Cynthia Klock, Commissioner  
555 Northgate Drive  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
(415) 499-3282

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 74  
Enrollment: 28,703  
14.2% Free or reduced lunch

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## COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission feels that indirectly everything they do is for School Readiness. There is some concern that the Prop 10 State Commission's focus on 0-5 year old children now appears to be shifting more toward 3-5 year olds. They also feel that the School Readiness focus should go beyond high-risk populations, because that would normalize services as well as increase sustainability. Marin County Prop 10 Commission continues to conceive of "School Readiness" in a comprehensive and inclusive way. In other words, preparing children to learn and to be successful in school involves all aspects of a child's development (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual). In addition, School Readiness entails addressing everything from availability of food, clothing, shelter, health and safety to early learning and literacy skills, socialization skills and family stability.

## CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Marin is a small community, which facilitates the identification of target populations. In addition, Marin has a good history of collaboration and buy-in among different agencies.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** None specifically. However, there are low performing schools with which the Commission would like to work with in regards to School Readiness.
- **School Readiness Model:** No School Readiness model was identified at the time of the interview. However, whichever model is developed, will reflect the necessity of a seamless transition from pre-school to school. Therefore, it will entail close cooperation among early childhood educators, parents, schools, and coordination of services currently targeted at segmented age cohorts (e.g. 0-3, 3-5 Early Head Start and Head Start).
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** There are several collaborative efforts already underway in the two districts with low-performing schools and a variety of public and non-profit services. The Marin Commission is currently in the process of facilitating a funding collaborative which will convene all of the stakeholders in the two identified low-performing districts to design and implement a pilot initiative for the county. The goal is to create an approach that will be flexible enough to target low-performing children, either in groups (as in these districts with high concentrations of low-performing children) or, adapting the School-linked services model that targets individual children in any school district. At two of the schools, services are co-located on school grounds and easily accessible to the children and families in the area. They also have the cooperation and support of the

elementary schools' administration and faculty. The Marin Commission will be working closely with these agencies, the schools districts, the Marin County Office of Education, and the parents/caregivers in the community to develop its School Readiness initiative.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** Currently there is no system of evaluation for School Readiness projects.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Marin County does not qualify for very much School Readiness funding because they do not have many low performing schools. Although Marin does not have a large number of low-performing schools as identified by the state testing (API scores), there are significant numbers of low-performing children throughout the county when assessed by both test scores as well as other school performance measures. In addition, those districts with low-performing schools also have, as might be expected, enormous additional challenges created by poverty, racism, lack of English-language proficiency and literacy among the adult population, and general lack of resources. The opportunity for the Commission is that they can focus on a small target population within the low performing schools.



## MENDOCINO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 13, 2001

**Interviewee:**

Anne Molgaard, Executive Director  
404 South School Street  
Ukiah, CA 95482  
(707) 462-4453

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 69  
Enrollment: 15,358  
49.7% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The initial response was a sense of shock. The Commission felt as though there was an imposition from the state to take authority without responsibility. The Commission felt that the work of the strategic plan was being usurped by the state's agenda. There is concern that this recent push is completely motivated by politics and concern over unspent funds. There are also questions around the definition of School Readiness. The Commission would like a one-sentence definition of School Readiness so that everyone is on the same page. In addition, there is a fear of over assessment.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** One of the major strengths is the movement to integrate services such as public health, social services, office of education, and county board of supervisors.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Various needs include transportation, geographic isolation, lack of resources, and the presence of 6 under-performing schools in a county of only 90,000 people. English language learners, and a shift in demographics (growing Latino populations).
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview no model for School Readiness had been identified.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Mendocino County is in the process of funding two child care facilities designed as Family Resource Centers. One is located at an under-performing school.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview no system for evaluation had been identified.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Healthy Start has shown that, if designed well, programs run on a local basis can be very effective. The challenges are lack of leadership, insufficient number of staff, funding, and bad economy.

## MODOC COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 18, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Donna Michelson, Executive Director  
Carol Harbaugh, Commissioner  
127 "B" South Main Street  
Merced, CA 95340  
(530) 233-0910

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 21  
Enrollment: 2,255  
52.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission felt that the School Readiness Initiative was a definite fit with what they are already working on. However, the Commission is not in agreement regarding the master plan for educational materials presented at several Prop 10 meetings.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Partnering agencies, such as Maternal Child and Adult Health, County Department of Health, County Department of Mental Health, Mountain View Foster Family Agency, Even Start Family Literacy Program, Adult Education, County Office of Education, Childcare Planning Council, and Healthy Start all provide a strong base for School Readiness efforts. The county has been working collaboratively for the past 8 years, particularly due to the Healthy Start Initiative.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** There is a need to reach families before preschool. Specifically, a center based program for 0-3 year olds. In addition, there is also a need to reach Spanish-speaking English learners.
- **School Readiness Model:** No School Readiness model at this time.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** While School Readiness is a priority, the Commission is not yet funding any projects.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview no evaluation system for School Readiness had been established.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The primary challenge is to allow the voice of the community to dictate how School Readiness is defined/implemented rather than having the "experts" who are in a position to control the funding decide how School Readiness efforts should be structured. Facilitating smoother transitions from Early Head Start to preschool programs and from preschool to kindergarten also pose challenges.

## MONO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** July 9, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Rene Doran, Executive Director  
Rich McAteer, County Superintendent of  
Schools-Commissioner  
Mono County Office of Education  
P.O. Box 130  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546  
(760) 924-7626

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 18  
Enrollment: 2,140  
39.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission is still developing their own capacity as a Commission. Since Mono County does not qualify for School Readiness funds it is not a top priority at this time.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Strong schools are one of the strengths in the community. In addition, they have collaboratives with Amaca and grants through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Healthy Start that provide support toward various efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Community needs include finding qualified personnel, cultural issues related to the Latino population, transportation, and securing facilities.
- **School Readiness Model:** There was no specific School Readiness model identified at the time of the interview.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** A lot of the activities/programs the Commission is focusing on right now may be considered School Readiness in the future. The Commission is committed to the public health nurse home visitation concept. In addition, they take part in childcare programs and health care needs programs.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, there was no established evaluation system for School Readiness.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission feels that as a community they are dedicated to collaborating and making things work, which will positively contribute to School Readiness efforts. The challenges are funding based on the size of the population, transportation, and lack of facilities.

## MONTEREY COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Sal Castillo, Executive Director  
1125 Baldwin Street  
Salinas, CA 93906  
(831) 444-8549 X 20

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 118  
Enrollment: 72,529  
54.6% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission's response was positive. There are questions and some concern about how applicable it will be for rural areas.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The staff is very motivated and there is a deep desire to serve impoverished areas.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Some of the needs identified include access to services, high poverty rate, high ratio of low performing schools, and teen pregnancy.
- **School Readiness Model:** Monterey County does have a model. The Salinas Adult School, which is operated by the school district, provides a continuum of services such as family support and parenting classes.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** At this time there are no School Readiness activities.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The Commission is doing self-evaluations that were developed by UC Monterey Bay.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

There is a lot of opportunity because of the number of schools that meet the criteria for School Readiness funding. In addition, city government, County Children's Council and the community as a whole are very supportive. The challenges are the sheer number of kids who qualify for School Readiness funding as well as geographic isolation, language barriers, transportation, and matching dollars.

## NAPA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewee:**

Sally Sheehan-Brown, Executive Director  
5 Financial Plaza, Ste. 228  
Napa, CA 94558  
(707) 257-1410

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 49  
Enrollment: 19,341  
33.5% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

They are interested in School Readiness but are also concerned with keeping their commitment and focus on current projects. They are supportive of School Readiness and feel that they have a good basis to start working on it.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There is a very strong collaborative called the CARES project which includes the Childcare Planning Council, County Office of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy Start, COPE (home visitation program), ALDEA (counseling services), Napa Community College, and Pacific Union College. This collaborative has created a good base because they are already working together as a community.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** None specifically.
- **School Readiness Model:** Currently there is no School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Currently working on two projects that generally relate to School Readiness. After preliminary discussion with the County Office of Education and the Napa Valley Unified School District (with the two under performing schools) they have decided to plan a county wide Forum in November to bring as many partners as possible together. The Commission has a grant writer already well connected in Napa (who has assisted with several strategic plans including Prop 10's and the local Child Care Planning Council's) who is doing research and will assume the role of facilitator for The Forum. People in the community seem very excited and supportive of developing a plan and submitting it by January 15.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** Currently there is no established evaluation system for School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

One of the primary challenges is defining School Readiness. In addition, Napa has some very isolated areas with few resources. The Commission would like to reach those isolated areas as well as the migrant population in the county. The Commission also feels that there is an opportunity to address the childcare crisis as it relates to School Readiness.

## ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Mike Ruane, Executive Director  
10 Civic Center Plaza, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Santa Ana, CA 92701  
(714) 834-2307

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 567  
Enrollment: 494,178  
36.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

In general, the Commission is positive about School Readiness. They have questions about the actual definition of School Readiness, because they believe that everything they do relates to School Readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The fact that Orange County is relatively geographically compact makes it easier for people to get together for discussions. In addition, they have very sophisticated schools and collaboratives that are supportive of School Readiness efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The increasing number of English learners and changing demographics serve as obstacles/challenges to School Readiness efforts.
- **School Readiness Model:** There are three ideas for a School Readiness model: 1) funding School Readiness Coordinators; 2) establishing Family Resource Centers; and 3) developing District School Readiness Centers.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Currently they are funding a primary school initiative. They have funded School Readiness centers at three locations. In order to build the bridge between the early care community and the School Readiness community the Commission hired someone from early care to be the School Readiness Coordinator for the Commission.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** The School Readiness Coordinator is currently working on an evaluation component. They have outcome measures and CS&O are doing an Internet tracking system for funding. They would like to shy away from process measures, but this may be the only measurable criterion for new programs.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

There is an opportunity to link the business community with community leaders. In addition, School Readiness will allow Prop 10 to link their outcomes to community benefits as a whole. The challenge is to get school districts that aren't on board yet involved, as well as linking the early care and school communities.

## PLACER COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 27, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Don Feretti, Executive Director  
Jill Harper, Commissioner  
11730 Enterprise Drive  
Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 889-6751

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 97  
Enrollment: 55,531  
16.7% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

School Readiness is part of the Placer County's strategic plan, so it is something they have been focused on from the outset.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Placer County has a strong history of collaboration. One of the guiding principles in the Commission's strategic plan is to build on existing community strengths, such as collaboration.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The primary need is to increase availability of quality childcare. There are a rising number of working parents who do not have time to spend with their children. In addition, there are some school districts in the county that have a high percentage of non-English speaking students.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, there was no established School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Current activities include funding an Early Literacy Program, Baby Steps program, Tutor Totter program (emphasis on child development), and collaborating with County Office of Education on a childcare provider retention program. Placer will partner with existing community efforts to accomplish School Readiness and this may include Family Resource Centers and/or informal groups and associations working in the neighborhoods served by the eligible schools.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview there was no established evaluation system for School Readiness.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission views School Readiness as an opportunity for enhancement and encouragement, not blame. The challenges are high staff turnover as well as differences between various geographic areas in the county.

## PLUMAS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Date:** July 2, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Ellen Viera (ED)  
P.O. Box 3140  
Quincy, CA 95971  
(530) 283-6159

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 18  
Enrollment: 3,406  
35.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Plumas County is not eligible for School Readiness funding. The responses to the initiative varied. Some thought it was too bureaucratic, while others thought it was a good idea to link counties and schools. However, this linkage is not always appropriate for rural communities. Some Commissioners think the plan is too prescriptive and that each county should be able to decide what is best for their community.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Resources that Plumas County has to support a School Readiness Initiative include: strong county-wide collaboratives, established Family Resource Centers, and 2 new Healthy Start sites in communities with the most low income families. In addition, one of the communities is in the process of applying for an Early Head Start grant.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission identified community needs by conducting various community assessments. Low literacy levels and lack of transportation were named as the most critical needs.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, Plumas County did not have a model for School Readiness.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** School Readiness has been identified as a community priority, but has not been specifically named School Readiness in their strategic plan. However, they have engaged in similar efforts such as toddler programs and Family Resource Centers.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, there was no established evaluation plan.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Because Plumas County is not eligible for School Readiness funding one of the challenges they face is in identifying where they fit into the School Readiness framework. Another challenge is the lack of state and federal funding for rural counties like Plumas. Also, the Community College collaboration is weak. The Faith Community has also not been very involved, as there is no interfaith council. Some of the opportunities Plumas County has that will serve as a resource is the fact that they are creative and consequently have the ability to do a lot with limited funding.



## RIVERSIDE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Carolyn Wylie, Executive Director  
Jan Peterson, Commissioner  
Stella Smith, Deputy Director  
Susan Harrington, Health Working Group  
Dave Long, Commissioner  
4065 County Circle Dr., Room 318  
Riverside, CA 92503  
(909) 828-6368

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 367  
Enrollment: 319,910  
49% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The initial response from the Commission was that the new initiative was a "breath of fresh air". It made sense to them.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Riverside has had a focus on early childhood for many years through the Childcare Consortium. In addition, the County Office of Education, school districts, and other community members are very supportive of School Readiness efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The specific community needs vary from region to region within the county. There are schools with a high number of English learners, low socio-economic levels, need for increased access to dental care, childcare, and early childhood services as a whole. Based on 1998 data 93 schools qualify for School Readiness, indicating that there are significant needs related to School Readiness through out the county.
- **School Readiness Model:** The model used for the School Readiness Initiative revolves around the concept of School Readiness Centers. The School Readiness Centers will offer different services depending on what the most significant needs are in the community surrounding them. However, there will be a focus on health as well as child development. In addition, the School Readiness Centers will support families as a whole. At the time of the interview, the Commission had a plan to develop four School Readiness Centers in four different regions of the county. There is a possibility that there will be up to six Centers, as well as Satellite Centers that can serve populations that may have difficulty accessing the services at specific locations. There will be "Decision Sharing Councils" for each School Readiness Center that will be comprised of parents, schools, and other community representatives.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Riverside County is currently in the process of developing an RFP to allocate the Prop 10 School Readiness funds. They are also developing 4 School Readiness Centers, the first of which may be operational by April 2002.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, no detailed system of evaluation for School Readiness efforts had been established.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

One of the challenges identified was the fact that not all District Superintendents understand the importance of early childhood to the K-12 system. In addition, building School Readiness Centers entails complicated issues related to building facilities, such as “pre-qualifying” architects to avoid spending a lot of time dealing sales pitches from architects.

## SACRAMENTO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Lin Batten (ED)  
Karla Rice (Comm.)  
Lori Morris (Program Planner)  
1010 Hurley Way, Suite 450  
Sacramento, CA 95821  
(916) 929-2384

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 345  
Enrollment: 222,224  
45% Free or reduced lunch

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## COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Initially the Sacramento County Commission was very interested. They are in the midst of their first round of funding and are planning to have School Readiness activities planned by fall.

## CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There are a lot of collaborations going on at numerous schools that can easily incorporate School Readiness efforts. Another resource is that the programs already in existence are culturally sensitive. Other strengths in Sacramento County lie in that there is a lot of support from the California Department of Education, institutes of higher education, and public and private providers of early childhood education. In addition, there is strong community involvement.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Sacramento has identified the increasing number of second language speakers and low academic test scores as prevalent needs in the county.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, there was no identified model for School Readiness.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Not currently funding School Readiness projects, however it is one of the five targeted result areas for the RFPs that have recently been sent out.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, there was no established evaluation system for School Readiness efforts.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Obtaining and maintaining parent involvement in issues pertaining to their children's lives was identified as one of the challenges facing the county. Also how to expand existing programs to address School Readiness is also an obstacle. Achieving buy-in from schools to support School Readiness activities has also been a challenge. However, opportunities for incorporating School Readiness ventures lies in that an increasing number of families with young children are gaining access to needed resources.

## SAN BENITO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Jennifer Billman (ED)  
321 San Felipe Road  
Hollister, CA 95023  
(831) 634-2046

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 23  
Enrollment: 11,501  
33.3% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

There has not been a response one way or another. The San Benito Commission has reportedly accepted the fact that this is the new focus.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The greatest community strength is that all the Superintendents in the county have committed resources and support to the School Readiness effort.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The community needs identified that reinforce the importance of a School Readiness focus include the large Spanish-speaking population and the need for quality childcare providers.
- **School Readiness Model:** As part of the model an advisory board will be established. There will also be sub-advisory groups for each of the different School Readiness programs.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** San Benito County uses School Readiness as a guiding principal to funding projects. Every school district has been funded by Prop 10 to address School Readiness. Home visiting programs have also been established. Other programs related to School Readiness include: Migrant Education Home-based Preschool, Mobile Preschool, summer program to prepare four-year olds for kindergarten, and the allocation of mini-grants given to improve the quality of care of in-home providers.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, no evaluation system for School Readiness had been established.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Because San Benito is a rural county, transportation problems are a significant issue. Challenges also include language differences throughout the county and limited funding for programs. The County's positive relationship with schools creates an opportunity for the School Readiness focus to be successful.

## SAN BERNARDINO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** August 3, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Jane Adams (ED)  
330 North "D" Street, Suite 420  
San Bernardino, CA 92401  
(909) 386-7706

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 457  
Enrollment: 380,830  
50.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Executive Director gave a presentation on July 30<sup>th</sup> about School Readiness. It was the Commissioners first time hearing about the topic, and they have had no had an opportunity to share their thoughts on the issue.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Strong collaborative efforts are one of the strongest resources in the County.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** San Bernardino is geographically spread-out, and each different area has a different needs. They also have 99 low performing schools and high amounts of poverty.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, no model for School Readiness had been identified.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Current School Readiness activities include: building effective connections between the community and families and establishing resource centers for parents.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, no evaluation efforts had been identified.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

One of the challenges to developing successful School Readiness programming in San Bernardino is posed by the fact that the geography is very spread-out and economically and culturally diverse. The County is also challenged by the state's rapid push of the new focus. The Executive Director reported that the state has put School Readiness on a fast track, which may threaten their ability to put together effective and useful programs.

## SAN DIEGO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 9, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Gloria Bryngleson, Executive Director  
Barbara Ryan, Commissioner  
1495 Pacific Hwy, Ste. 202  
MS-A211  
San Diego, CA 92101  
(619) 238-7810

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 612  
Enrollment: 488,377  
39.7% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Both the Executive Director and a Commissioner are participating in the State Commission's Technical Assistance Subcommittee, which is in charge of planning the fast track process for School Readiness. The San Diego County Commission adopted School Readiness as a primary focus in 2000; consequently, it is not a new concept to them. They are still deciding if they will participate in the first tier of School Readiness funding.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There are 18 Healthy Start sites in the County, which provide a strong base for collaboration as well as an already established structure to build on. San Diego County also has AB 1741, which gives the community the ability to blend federal, state, and local monies. The ability to combine funding sources also allows the county to apply for state waivers. Finally, the School Districts and the County Office of Education are supportive of School Readiness efforts.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Parents stated that children are born ready to learn but need support from the community and services need to be located in the neighborhood.
- **School Readiness Model:** The feeling is that in a county of this size one model would not work. They would want communities to develop their own plan or model. Discussions regarding a model will be taking place soon.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Current activities include community collaboratives and Family Resource Center activities. There are 50-60 grants being processed. The current plan is multi-tiered and very focused around School Readiness. The plan doesn't describe fundable programs but acts as a road map for how decisions will be made.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview there was no evaluation plan.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The number of school districts and 49 catchment areas that would qualify for this funding pose a challenge. They are currently working on mapping to identify the districts that qualify, map the Healthy Start sites, and identify the gaps. The Commission does not want to duplicate other funding sources. The Commission believes the opportunities for School Readiness are endless – the availability of this funding will increase children's ability to be successful in life.

## SAN FRANCISCO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Rick Spear (ED)  
1390 Market Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 934-4854

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 119  
Enrollment: 61,766  
40.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The County expects to approve participation in the School Readiness Initiative at its November meeting. The school district is interested in participating and the Commission is awaiting a letter affirming its commitment and identifying the priority schools for participation.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The County has an abundance of effective childcare and health services providers.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:**
- **School Readiness Model:** No model was reported.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Meetings have been held with the school district to assess its interest in the project. As stated above, we are awaiting a letter committing them to participate. We are in the process of developing an outline for our planning efforts and will be bringing on a School Readiness coordinator to oversee the project.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** No evaluation reported.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

San Francisco County foresees various challenges in incorporating the new School Readiness Initiative. One of the continued challenges is in building linkages amongst the various service provision agencies. The application package is extremely onerous. The need to be at Phase I, as described in the application is completely unrealistic. Phase I describes a perfect world, not a bases for building a School Readiness program.

## SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 5, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Lani Schiff-Ross, Executive Director  
Susan de Polo, Commissioner  
222 East Weber Ave.  
Courthouse Room 678  
Stockton, CA 95202  
(209) 468-0250

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 182  
Enrollment: 122,349  
46.5% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Entities in the County were aware of this focus before the Commission was. The Commission is 80% on board now but need technical assistance to persuade the rest to realize the scope. Roberta Peck came to the last meeting and that was very helpful.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The Healthy Start schools are an asset. There are a lot of organizations and individuals working together and willing to put kids first over territoriality. They have been able to bring leaders together – the ones who can write the checks. The business community is supportive and involved as well as civic and University partners – such as the University of the Pacific.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** A RAND report 5-6 years ago looked at San Joaquin County and found that it will mirror the State and the nation by the year 2020. There are 54 different language groups, migrant populations, “we have it all.”
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission wants to release an RFP with best practices to follow, such as Elizabeth Learning Center or their Neighborhood Service Centers. The scope is school, district, and countywide. There are citywide and countywide centers and two school districts, Stockton and Lodi, that are involved. There are 38 schools involved. The ideal plan is to have 14 centers. There are three now, although one is still in development. There is a tentative plan to have seven centers.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:**
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:**

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Challenges for San Joaquin County include getting information from the state, obtaining community buy-in, and making local decisions about spending. The opportunity is to make a difference and see kids doing better.



## SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 6, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Susan Hughes, Executive Director  
Elizabeth (Biz) Steinberg, Commissioner  
2995 McMillan Ave., Suite 282  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 781-4058

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 81  
Enrollment: 37,561  
29.4% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission is very supportive of the new initiative. They realize that this was a wise way of trying to include 0-5 year olds.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** One of the community strengths is the presence of already existing collaboratives. Also, the State Prop 10 Commission itself was reported as a resource, as it pulls the County Commission together.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The biggest concern for this County is the rising prices of housing. Moreover, families have to work more to pay for the cost of living, which, in turn, takes them away from their children.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, there was no School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Some of the projects the Commission is working on relate to School Readiness but are not specifically identified as being for School Readiness. One project is working toward establishing full-day/full-year preschools. They are also looking into programs to make the transition easier from preschool to kindergarten.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, there was no established system of evaluation for School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

San Luis Obispo County does not qualify for very much School Readiness funding because they do not have many low performing schools. Another challenges facing the county is making school districts, and families, aware of how important a child's early years are. The opportunity for the Commission is that they can focus on a small target population within the low performing schools.

## SAN MATEO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 4, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Kristin Perry, Executive Director  
400 So. El Camino Real, Ste. 1500  
San Mateo, CA 94402  
(650) 802-5090

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 173  
Enrollment: 91,205  
23.5% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The San Mateo Commission is interested in the process of learning how to move forward on the School Readiness Initiative.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The biggest strength is pre-existing collaboratives in the county. The Peninsula Partnership, which has been instrumental in this effort, is also lead by several Commission members and staff. The Peninsula Partnership consists of 18-20 individuals representing various City and County departments, schools, private businesses, foundations, and community agencies. A committee of eight of these members recently reviewed Kindergarten Readiness and Universal Preschool in San Mateo County. Prop 10 is linked to this effort as a potential source of funding for future initiatives. The Peninsula Partnership focuses on 0-8 year old children, and Prop 10 is focusing on 0-5 year olds via Home Visiting, Family Resource Centers and Kindergarten Readiness.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** A Children's Report Card, which is done every two years, documents a variety of indicators regarding school, health, and other areas. The Children's Report Card is now used as a guide for services through out the County. As a County, San Mateo is both ethnically and linguistically diverse, with both Spanish and Asian Languages spoken. Socio-economically, San Mateo is a relatively wealthy County. However, there are areas, such as South County and Coastside that are less resource rich. In these areas, the population has greater needs.
- **School Readiness Model:** There was no countywide model for School Readiness in June 2001. However, the kindergarten readiness tool, coupled with other school-based initiatives, is being coordinated to look county-wide at School Readiness. The Kindergarten Readiness is a tool to assess readiness and is joined with a remedial pre-kindergarten summer program to help kids who are behind or who haven't had a school experience. The program is six weeks long and is taught by kindergarten teachers. It is funded through Prop 10 and is Countywide in nine school districts.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** San Mateo County is funding several Family Resource Centers in the community and is working on early childhood development. They are studying the feasibility of universal pre-kindergarten programs and have funded tools to assess kindergarten readiness. San Mateo County is applying for Phase 1 School Readiness funding on Jan 15, 2001. 11 schools have been identified as "low performing". Each of these schools is working with the Commission and Peninsula staff to prepare for the work of School Readiness.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The Commission has a program evaluation model. The program is only six months old so no evaluations have been completed yet.

#### **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Cultural differences in children when measuring school readiness challenge tool development. Also accessing and doing outreach to kids – how to find those most in need is a challenge. A final challenge is obtaining school district cooperation. The opportunities are around pre-kindergarten feasibility analysis – learning about financing, cost, and benefits. In addition, there is an opportunity to bring attention to young children and work to develop a system to address all of their needs.

## SANTA BARBARA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 11, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Patricia Wheatley (ED)  
One East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 884-8085

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 110  
Enrollment: 66,012  
40.4% free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The initial reaction to School Readiness was not good. The Commission was concerned that it would be politicized. They wanted School Readiness to look at the total child. They were concerned about the state not being sensitive to the individual needs of the counties. The Commission is more receptive now but there is still concern about ineffectiveness of basing funding on testing.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** One of the county strengths is that the county superintendent is very committed to early childhood issues.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Executive Director reported some of the needs of the community including the following: low performing schools, primarily Spanish speaking population, and a high percentage of free and reduced lunch recipients.
- **School Readiness Model:** The Commission is going to have a flexible School Readiness model that addresses the needs of different communities.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Some of the projects relating to School Readiness include the following: elementary programs have been expanded to serve the Pre-K population, expanded Healthy Start to serve 0-5 population, and a home visiting program. The Commission is currently conducting "Community Conversations" to assess what the needs of individual communities are. They will then use this information to develop School Readiness projects.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** Evaluation efforts have not yet begun. They are working on establishing a computerized evaluation system.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

One of the significant challenges of establishing School Readiness programming is the fact that the county has both urban and rural regions. Other challenges include language barriers and the arduous task of getting residents comfortable with receiving services. The Executive Director reported that opportunity lies in the possibility of augmenting what they are already doing to meet more of the needs through out the county.

## SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 18, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Karen Blinstrub, Executive Director  
Cindy Ruby, Commissioner  
1150 South Bascom Ave. # 12  
San Jose, CA 95128  
(408) 289-5330

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 378  
Enrollment: 254,004  
27.4% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Santa Clara felt that they were already engaged in the activities that the State defined as School Readiness. In April of 2001, they had a presentation at their county meeting, and they have had substantive discussions on School Readiness at their retreat. In addition, Jane Henderson presented to the county regarding the School Readiness effort.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The County already has two school districts that have a very integrated approach to School Readiness and they believe these can be used as a model. In addition, a strong parent support group for special needs kids exists in the county, and can be called upon for assistance.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The largest need that reinforces the support of School Readiness efforts in Santa Clara is the "digital divide." The county has the very wealthy (from the Silicon Valley) and the very poor, but not much of a middle class. Many poor families cannot afford childcare (up to \$1500/Mo.), and there are 44 schools below the 30th percentile, mostly located in low-income neighborhoods.
- **School Readiness Model:** Santa Clara does not have one articulated model in place for the entire county. They feel the county is too diverse. The scope of their efforts is district wide, there are 19 districts in the county, and they are currently targeting 4 of them for School Readiness efforts. These efforts will include such projects as Family Resource Centers (both school based and school linked), as well as partnerships with Head Start, Healthy Start, and local Community Based Organizations.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Currently, every region in the County has its own collaborative, and the Commission has a strong relationship with each of them. The Commission has funded 61 focus groups done in different areas of the county using hired outreach workers from the local communities who are fluent in the local language. In addition, the Commission meetings are attended by representatives from the County Office of Education, Health and Human Services, Mental Health, Social Services, County Executive Office, Community Based Organizations, School Districts, and the individual cities. Currently the Commission has funded a Center for Learning Achievement to help with the early detection of developmental, emotional, or other issues for children 0-5. They have neighborhood collaboratives in 5 regions of the County, as well as a County-wide home visitation program for the prenatal to 2-year-old children. They are also helping to fund the counties Universal Health Insurance for children initiative with \$2million a year for three years to help cover the cost of the insurance for prenatal to five year olds. In the near future,

the county is planning on funding a program to work on the training and retention of early childcare providers, as well as literacy and arts enrichment programs. They are starting work on a database to identify how many children do have childcare, and they have set aside \$2 million dollars to help early childcare providers upgrade their equipment.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The County is in the process of contracting with a private company to evaluate their activities. The evaluation, not yet developed, will examine both process and outcome of activities.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

The biggest challenge that Santa Clara County has identified is the short time line for the implementation of the School Readiness initiative. They just heard about it in April, and they are targeting a September 1 start date for many of their programs. However, with many schools closed for the summer they feel this may be difficult; they feel that their best opportunity lies in expanding some of the already existing programs in several of their school districts.

## SHASTA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 12, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Muffy Berryhill (ED)  
Barbara Lapp (Comm.)  
Dennis McFall (Comm.)  
1670 Market Street #246  
Redding, CA 96001  
(530) 229-8300

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 93  
Enrollment: 30,440  
41.9% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Commission's initial response was positive. However, they do have some concern about the API scoring method. There are also some questions about funding streams and whether this might be duplicate funding. Shasta does see the School Readiness Initiative as providing an opportunity to work collaboratively within the community to develop a new system of comprehensive service delivery.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Several community strengths were identified. Healthy Start is strong in the community. The size of the county is also beneficial as there is a greater opportunity to form strong bonds with school superintendents and school board members. There has been a movement towards focusing and developing grassroots relationships. There are also a number of existing partnerships focused on children and youth (e.g. Children's Policy Council (CPC), Health improvement Partnership). The concept of Family Resource Centers has been adopted by agencies on CPC as the preferred and targeted service delivery system.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The following community needs were reported: leadership, establishing community infrastructure and development, transportation, poverty, childcare, and multilingual and a multicultural population.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, there was no School Readiness model identified.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The County has not identified current School Readiness activities.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** At the time of the interview, no system of evaluation for School Readiness efforts was established.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Shasta County identified the following challenges to establishing School Readiness efforts: availability of resources, complexity of funding streams, administrative barriers, and the neutral relationship with school districts.

## SIERRA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 14, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Gloria Wyeth, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 556  
Loyalton, CA 96118  
(530) 993-4884

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 12  
Enrollment: 1,621  
12.6% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Sierra County Commissioners are very aware of the School Readiness focus. Two children's centers are in the planning stages, so there is much interest in School Readiness. However, they are disappointed that reading scores are the only criteria being used to determine eligibility as a low-performing school and thus eligibility for School Readiness monies. They have had an excellent reading program in place, are doing well in this area, and thus don't qualify for money. The Commission believes that there are other indicators that should be taken into account. Another concern is that the indicators seem (as discussed in Reaching Back) Education-centric rather than community-based.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Strengths include an active County Office of Education, school district, child abuse council, literacy program, and Social Service and Health Departments. There is a lot of excitement about coming together as a community. There is a sideline movement to combine a library with the Children's Center in Loyalton that is also drawing positive attention.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The Commission conducted a needs assessment and found several gaps that required immediate attention. These include: enhancing medical services, transportation, child care (additional spots, better quality, increased hours, increased affordability), special needs services, parenting classes, support and assistance for family members, educational and recreational opportunities for young children, and information about child development and how to raise children. The most pressing issues are health insurance, dental care, speech therapy, and nutrition.
- **School Readiness Model:** Their model is fairly organized with a shared vision, but nothing has been put in writing. The Commission will not run the two centers, which will each be uniquely tailored to its community. A Children and Families Center in Loyalton will serve the east side of the county, which includes about two-thirds of the county's population, and the Good Year's Children and Families Center will serve the Downieville area and the west side of the county. They are working at the county level to accomplish these goals.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Sierra County is collaborating with existing agencies to fund several Children's programs throughout the county, including day-care enrichment programs, fire and hazard safety, family literacy, improved health care services, and educational and recreational opportunities.



- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** There is no current evaluation plan for the two new centers. However, the evaluation plan will focus on more than reading and numerical skills to develop a holistic evaluation strategy.

#### **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

A comprehensive and extensive needs assessment identified a general reluctance among families to avail themselves of existing services, resulting in services that are underused. Among a list of ten major services provided throughout the County, only the County Health Department, including the WIC program, are well known and utilized. There is an obvious need for innovative solutions to this problem. Other challenges include the need for increased funding, which is always a challenge given the very small population and therefore small numbers to be served by any program. Because of its small population, Sierra County agencies understand how well collaboration works to utilize funding as effectively as possible. In the instance of the Loyalton Children and Families Center, funding will be provided by the County Office of Education, Prop 10, and perhaps a library bond grant and/or other funding sources.

## SISKIYOU COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 28, 2001

**Interviewees:**

David Herfindahl, Commission Chairperson  
Barbara Dillmann, Commissioner  
251 Main Street  
Weed, CA 96094  
(530) 938-2834

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 61  
Enrollment: 7,423  
52.8% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Siskiyou County Commission was concerned about CCFC's decision to limit eligibility for School Readiness monies to low performing schools based on the API scores. In Siskiyou County there are few low performing schools. Their concern is that by looking at just one snapshot API score as an indicator, baseline and trending data are ignored. They assert that although many of their schools are so small that their numbers are not applicable to statistical analysis, they nonetheless have great needs. For example, the Commission met recently and discussed the school in Forks of Salmon. With only 11 tests, this school doesn't even show up in state rankings; however, 100% of the students are TANF recipients.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** There are not a lot of services for children in Siskiyou County. However, infant/toddler programs are non-existent. Affordable quality day care at variable hours of operation is in crisis. What the County does have is the commitment to solve problems at the local level. County Prop 10 efforts have shown the citizens that while local government can provide the scaffolding for the process and is responsible for the basic infrastructure, local problems have to be met and solved at the community level using an asset based inclusive process. The communities are now recognizing this, and therein lies the strength and potential.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Community needs include lack of parent education, needy children who are unprepared for school, transience, language barriers, lack of infant and toddler child care, transportation, child abuse, drug abuse, and high unemployment. 65% of children across the County qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program. These needs were assessed through focus groups and community groups' surveys conducted by Healthy Start, Head Start, and the Commission.
- **School Readiness Model:** There is a Family Resource Center in the community of Dunsmuir. The Family Resource Center is located in the old high school but is not closely tied to the school district. Currently, it is not directly tied to the school, but the County can see that in the future that would be valuable. The initiative is community driven, rather than school driven. Due to declining enrollment there is more space at schools to implement these kinds of programs. Schools in Siskiyou County are also becoming more welcoming and are still seen as safe places.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The strategic plan is in revision now. There is 100% agreement among Commissioners that the plan needs to be community focused, community driven, and bottom up. They are in the process of developing a new

Community Services Council/Interagency Council to address children and family issues through out the County. There will be 21 members, including Public Health, County Office of Education, Human Services, Behavioral Health, Community College (College of the Siskiyous), Medical Center, CBOs, early childhood programs, CASA, district attorney, Sheriff, Chief of Police, Board of Supervisors, and the Karuk Tribe. This will be a huge effort to stop the overlap in services.

The Siskiyou County Prop 10 Commission has forgone the RFP method and has instead chosen to identify 10 communities in the County and fund one project in each community. The communities were then expected to come together to decide what was needed as a group and then create a project to pitch to the Commission. It has gone very well and the communities have really come together. The County's current projects include providing transportation, a library project, play activities for young children, a Family Resource Center, an after-school program, and a County-wide conference. Several of the programs have also been able to blend funding from other sources, most notably the Family Resource Center in Dunsmuir.

- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** The Commission considers data collection and evaluation to be critical. Managing the “data herd” is one of the important tasks that they must accomplish. They indicate that this is an area in which state technical assistance would be helpful. They have a very large number of children in their County living at the federal poverty level. They lead the state in lack of income, unemployment, a dwindling work force, abuse issues, and the percentage of families that are extremely poor.

#### **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Siskiyou County is large geographically and the population is distributed into many small, isolated, districts. The County is the fourth largest in area yet the fourth smallest in population. Other challenges include transportation and low parent education. The opportunities lie in the fact that communities are very interested in improving services and have come together to make changes directly through their efforts. There is an active Local Child Care Planning Council, a Family Interagency Services group (FISC), and the Small County Initiative, which are all very supportive.

## SOLANO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 5, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Paul Crissey, Executive Director  
2300 Boynton Ave., #204  
Fairfield, CA 94533  
(707) 435-2965

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 99  
Enrollment: 73,061  
29.4% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Solano characterized its response to the School Readiness initiative as mixed and somewhat negative. They indicate that their reaction was due in part to the manner in which the initiative was communicated to the counties. Solano also perceives the initiative as focusing too heavily on future outcomes, as opposed to working to improve the current condition of children's lives.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Solano indicates that it has a well-organized childcare community. Cities throughout Solano are also great resources, as residents have developed their own activities, rather than relying on county-wide efforts. The Solano County Prop 10 Commission is also a source of strength.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Segments of the population in Solano county are isolated, particularly those individuals in rural areas and the migrant population. The County has what they describe as a disjointed medical system and poor prenatal statistics. There is also a tremendous need to build comprehensive programs and move away from the secularism of each city doing its own thing.
- **School Readiness Model:** Solano has not identified a specific School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Solano will provide a concrete answer to this question in three months after they have completed their planning phase.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** Currently, there is no system of evaluation for school readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

There is an overall lack of funding and resources in Solano. The agencies that provide services in the County tend not to be very diverse or well organized. For example, although a significant Latino community resides in Solano, no group exists that is dedicated to advocating and providing services to this population. In addition, the County indicates that a lack of dialogue with the school community poses a challenge. Solano also indicates that, because it is a smaller county, staff members are multitasking and that they cannot afford to obtain experts to specialize in certain tasks. Despite these challenges, Prop 10 has helped to fuel an emerging vision and leadership. Solano believes that it is now presented with an opportunity to affect systems change.

## SONOMA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** July 5, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Jennie Tasheff, Executive Director  
1030 Center Drive, Suite C  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
(707) 565-6638

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 163  
Enrollment: 73,689  
22.7% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Sonoma believes that School Readiness is a very important issue and the Commission is very interested in the initiative. They have established an ad hoc committee to determine if this new agenda is different than their strategic plan or if it is just a way of viewing their plan through a different lens.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The State University, Community Colleges, Family Resource Centers, and Community Based Organizations are all possible resources that Sonoma can draw upon in developing its School Readiness initiative.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Sonoma cites low performing schools, poor oral health, and general health needs as areas of need.
- **School Readiness Model:** Sonoma has not identified a specific School Readiness model. However, Even Start and Healthy Start have worked well in the community and are highly accepted.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Sonoma will use a district level focus to organize its efforts; it will focus specifically on low-performing schools. The local initiative will include home visitation and parent education programs, Family Resource Centers and high quality childcare.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** Currently there is no system of evaluation for school readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Sonoma cites the large number of school districts and the lack of willingness of schools to change as potential challenges to its School Readiness efforts. It does, however, view the initiative as an opportunity to improve linkages between the K-12 and early childhood educational systems.

## STANISLAUS COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 27, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Noe Paramo, Executive Director  
Sally Perez, Vice chair  
1010 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 6800  
Modesto, CA 95354  
(209) 525-6333

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 143  
Enrollment: 97,297  
47.2% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The School Readiness initiative was very well received by Stanislaus County. The Commissioners agree that this is a very important area that needs to be examined more carefully.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Stanislaus prides itself on the significant level of collaboration that takes place in the County. However, the county indicates that it still has work to conduct in the area of collaboration. The mechanisms for promoting collaboration are in place and it is a matter of bringing everyone together.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** A large Spanish speaking population resides in Stanislaus. Some areas throughout the county are approximately 60% Spanish speaking; however, these areas are not served by a bilingual program. In addition to these language and cultural issues, Stanislaus also articulated a need for parent education, child care, and child development training. Stanislaus also identified the large number of working parents in the county and the presence of low socioeconomic groups as indicators of need.
- **School Readiness Model:** Stanislaus has not identified a specific School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** As of the interview date, Stanislaus was not funding any specific School Readiness programs. However, the commission is releasing funds, small grants, for programs serving the 05 year old population. If the Commission were approached with a potential School Readiness related program, they would consider funding it.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** Currently there is no system of evaluation for School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Both geographic and population issues pose challenges to implementing a School Readiness initiative in Stanislaus. Stanislaus is an agricultural area, however, the county also has an urban area and spread out suburban areas. In addition to these demographic issues, the county also describes challenges in working with the school district. Communication, networking and the defining of leadership roles and responsibilities pose difficulties for both school district and Commission representatives. Despite these challenges, Stanislaus indicates that an opportunity exists to build on the collaboratives that are already in place. For example, it has quite a few Healthy Start sites working in this area.

## SUTTER COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 4, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Deborah Coulter, Executive Director  
Casey Kroon, Commission Chair  
951 Live Oak Blvd., Suite 35  
Yuba City, CA 95991  
(530) 822-7505

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 37  
Enrollment: 16,091  
55.1% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Sutter County is in the process of developing its strategic plan to address School Readiness. As of the interview date, the County did not have a formal response regarding the initiative.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** The Commission has established a strong working relationship with the school districts, pediatric groups, hospitals, and the Children's Home Society in their county.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Sutter representatives articulate an interest in gaining further clarity about the definition of School Readiness. They believe that an operational definition may help them to develop a greater focus on the topic.
- **School Readiness Model:** None specifically. The Commission is interested in the early identification of developmental problems and the provision of intervention services for children in child care settings, both center and home-based. They are currently working with the Sutter County Office of Education to develop assessment tools.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission is also collaborating with pediatricians to examine potential assessments that parents could utilize to help detect early learning difficulties. They are also working to develop a program that will provide families with a case manager to assist them with on-going issues and concerns.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview there was no system of evaluation for School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Sutter County is grappling with defining School Readiness. They scheduled a meeting for the end of June to discuss the concept further. They also indicate that their geography poses a challenge to the development of a School Readiness initiative. Despite these challenges, they describe the presence of strong collaborative partnerships within their county as an asset. They explain that they need to focus on coordinating their efforts and addressing any gaps in services that may exist.

## TEHAMA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 18, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Denise Snider  
P.O. Box 8580  
Red Bluff, CA 96080  
(503) 528-1395

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 41  
Enrollment: 10,786  
50.5% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Tehama indicates that it grasps the overall theme of the School Readiness initiative. While the county agrees with the concept, they indicate that they are somewhat uncomfortable with the State driving the agenda of local Prop 10 efforts.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Investments from both the Prop 10 Commission and the schools are available to support a School Readiness initiative.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Tehama has a need for dental care services as well as services to improve language development skills.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview Tehama had not identified a specific School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Within Tehama County, efforts are currently underway to improve preschool programs and childcare opportunities. They have created standards for programs serving 3 and 4 year-olds that are in line with the State's K-12 standards. They are also examining strategies to reach family day care providers to provide them with training and support.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview there was no system of evaluation for school readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

In addition to limitations due to financial resources, Tehama indicates that access to child care and preschool is problematic throughout the county. They also indicate that most early care is home-based and that providers possess minimal training.



## TRINITY COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 4, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Jim French, Executive Director  
Jerry Cousins  
John Siegel  
P.O. Box 1613  
Weaverville, CA 96093  
(530) 623-8322

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 22  
Enrollment: 2,204  
54.2% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Trinity incorporated School Readiness into its strategic plan during the early planning stages. As a result, they did not have a large reaction to it.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Trinity has a well-developed community collaborative focused on children's issues.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Kids First conducts a comprehensive needs assessment every two years. School Readiness related issues are consistently identified as areas of need.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, Trinity had not identified a specific School Readiness model.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Trinity has included School Readiness as a strand in all of its collaborative activities. One of its goals is that "every child is a healthy child." In support of this goal, Trinity provides immunizations, which serve to promote School Readiness. Another goal in Trinity's strategic plan states that, "every child will be ready to learn." Toward this end, the county views childcare and home visitation as important elements of a School Readiness initiative.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** At the time of the interview, there was no system of evaluation for School Readiness projects.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Poverty poses a significant challenge to Trinity's School Readiness efforts. The county's geography also presents difficulties; eleven school districts serve a total of 2000 children. These geographical realities also render access to universal preschool problematic. Conversely, Trinity has the advantage of small class sizes, which enables a substantial amount of individualized attention and interaction with children.

## TUOLUMNE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:**

**Interviewees:**

Sheila Kruse, Executive Director  
17795 Lucky Strike Trail  
Sonora, CA 95370  
(209) 586-0707

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 36  
Enrollment: 7,947  
36% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

The Tuolumne County Children and Families Commission is not eligible to participate in the statewide School Readiness Initiative. The Commission expressed an interest in observing the development of the initiative as it is implemented statewide and using this information to frame local funding activities under the school readiness focus.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Tuolumne has functioning Healthy Start and Even Start sites. Community providers in education, health, child care, and family support services have a history of sharing resources and working together collaboratively. As a result of this long-standing coalition, they have been able to use resources more efficiently and reduce the duplication of services.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Issues that pose barriers to School Readiness for children in Tuolumne County include: poverty, lack of medical and dental insurance, high rates of child neglect and abuse and resulting foster care, shortage of child care resources, especially for infant care and care during non-traditional hours, and acute shortages of child care subsidies. There are many children under five with severe oral health problems, and teachers report that there are a significant number of children who arrive at school unwashed, hungry, and in dirty or inadequate clothing.
- **School Readiness Model:** Tuolumne County's Commission has not identified one specific School Readiness model to date, since it is not eligible to participate in the initiative. However, all of the large grants that have been funded are based on other successful models of Family Literacy programs, Home Visiting programs, Early Literacy outreach programs and child care retention incentives.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** The Commission has provided large grants for the following efforts: (1) Family Literacy Centers; (2) comprehensive prenatal assessments; (3) case management services and prevention classes for at-risk families; (4) child care provider compensation and retention programs; and (5) early literacy activities. Smaller grants have been provided in the areas of oral health screening and prevention and child-abuse prevention programs. There is a granting mechanism in place to continue to provide various level of support to community providers that meet identified community needs.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** Currently there is no system of evaluation for School Readiness projects per se, because there are no projects that have been identified as such. However, all funded programs have an evaluation component.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

Tuolumne County's Commission asserts that limited funding poses a challenge to a new focus in that direction, since it has already committed the majority of its funds for the next three years to large grant projects, and will not receive additional funds through the statewide initiative. However, all of the programs funded fall under the four areas of priority defined by Prop 10 legislation (Family Functioning, Early Childhood Development, Health and Systems Change), and all support the concept of School Readiness, even though the Commission has not framed them to date as School Readiness activities. Engaging school districts in School Readiness efforts also presents challenges; Tuolumne expresses difficulty in involving 12 elementary schools, each separate, independent school district, in a meaningful dialogue about School Readiness-particularly, in the absence of significant resources to bring to the table.

Despite these challenges, several opportunities exist to enhance School Readiness efforts in Tuolumne County. The county indicates that many schools already support the School Readiness concept, as evidenced by school district support in hosting Head Start, Even Start, and Healthy Start programs. They speculate that schools will be even more receptive to considering collaborative opportunities should School Readiness be included in the State's Master Plan for Education. Moreover, the small size of the county enables initiatives to develop more rapidly than in larger locales; key players are quickly identified, are knowledgeable about each other's capacities and resources, and are therefore able to come to the negotiating table in an efficient and effective manner. In addition, the Commission believes that, due to the small size of the county, even a few, well-planned projects can have a large impact.

## VENTURA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** June 18, 2001

**Interviewees:**

Claudia Harrison, Executive Director  
Dr. Weiss, Superintendent of Schools and  
Commission Chair  
Ventura, CA 93003  
(805) 648-9990

**Demographics:**

Number of Schools: 197  
Enrollment: 140,156  
33.9% Free or reduced

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

Dr. Weiss sits on the advisory committee for the task force on School Readiness. The initiative is very consistent with what Ventura is doing on a local level.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Ventura is developing a platform upon which it will be able to build for its School Readiness initiative. It is working with schools, the childcare planning council, and other key stakeholders.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** Ventura has areas with high percentages of individuals for whom English is a second language. The county also has pockets of need in more affluent communities; however, it is more difficult to obtain assistance for these individuals because there are fewer services in these areas.
- **School Readiness Model:** Ventura has adopted a neighborhood-based School Readiness model. Though focused on individual neighborhoods, the initiative has a countywide scope and includes a total of 10 school districts.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Neighborhoods for Learning (NFL) will provide ongoing funding to new or existing providers of services to create and implement a multifaceted and integrated service delivery system aimed at maximizing support for children and their families in preparation for school. Each NFL will be unique to the community in which it operates.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Efforts:** Ventura will examine some key outcome measures. The county is currently in the process of identifying and selecting the data that they will use. In addition, the county will work with each of the neighborhoods to determine the information that will be utilized for evaluation purposes.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Ventura indicates that implementing the community based planning model has been a challenge. For the model to succeed, it is critical that neighborhoods have a leadership base from which to draw. In the most needy communities, however, there is often a need for leadership development. The commission has sent staff to these locations to augment this need and indicates that consultants are focusing a significant amount of time on building community leadership.

Although implementation of this neighborhood model poses challenge, Ventura indicates that it

also presents exciting opportunities. The concept of community based planning allows the county to develop and build upon the strong sense of community that already exists in Ventura. In addition, Ventura's institutions have a long history of working together collaboratively. For example, in developing "Systems of Care," Ventura became one of the first counties to collaborate to meet the needs of special needs children.

## YUBA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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**Interview Date:** August 20, 2001

**Interviewee:**

Evelyn Jocelin, Executive Director  
6000 Lindhurst Blvd., Ste. 504  
Marysville, CA 95901-6132  
(530) 749-6271

**Demographics:**

Number of schools: 36  
Enrollment: 13,547  
59% Free or reduced lunch

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### COUNTY COMMISSION'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO SCHOOL READINESS

They are interested and aware of the State Commission's focus on School Readiness.

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL READINESS ACTIVITIES

- **Community Strengths to Support School Readiness:** Collaborative partnerships, sharing funds, and existing Family Resource Centers.
- **Community Needs In Terms of School Readiness:** The needs assessment done by the collaborative has identified a need for playgrounds that are safe and well kept. Parents need to be better educated on what their children need developmentally. There is a high level of substance abuse by young parents with young children. There is not enough access to health care that accepts Medicare/Medical. Finally, there are language barriers in some communities.
- **School Readiness Model:** At the time of the interview, the Commission did not have a clearly articulated model for School Readiness.
- **Current Activities Pertaining to School Readiness:** Commission just released RFP for Family Resource Centers. On third of their funding will go toward FRC's. They anticipate providing funding to five already existing FRC's in the county. Three are school-based.
- **Evaluation of School Readiness Models:** Currently there is no established evaluation system for School Readiness efforts.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Remaining turf issues are being addressed and resolved. In addition, there is a need to educate people on the RFP process and bring the current infrastructure up to date. Currently there aren't many guidelines in the county for contracts. There is an incredible opportunity to meet the needs of the community in a more effective way. The Commission sees an opportunity to create endowments for young children and having school readiness impact the county tremendously over time.

## APPENDIX A

### School Readiness Interview Questions

#### UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities

10945 Le Conte Avenue  
Ueberroth Building, Suite 1401  
Box 956939  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-6939  
Phone: (310) 825-8042  
Fax: (310) 206-3180

**Background:** The California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) determined that 'school readiness' provides a needed focus for the Prop. 10 'result areas' described in our enabling legislation. As CCFC moves forward in partnership with all of the County Commissions, the following questions will help with strategies to launch and support our work together. We continue to work with the Governor's Office through the School Readiness Task Force as well as the Advisory Committee and the Legislative Joint Committee with the School Readiness Work Group for California's Master Plan for Education. County Commissions are represented on both of these important efforts. We appreciate your time and expertise in shaping our 'school readiness' efforts in California.

- 1) Is your County Commission aware of the CCFC focus on School Readiness?  
  
Yes    No
- 2) What was your County Commission's initial response? Please explain:
- 3) Have you or your County Commission reviewed the CCFC 'School Readiness Concept Paper'?    Yes    No
- 4) Have you or your County Commission reviewed the UCLA's 'Reaching Back To Create a Brighter Future: The Role of Schools in Promoting School Readiness'?  
Yes    No  
  
If 'yes,' do you have any reactions and/or suggestions you would like to share?
- 5) Does your County Commission strategic plan address School Readiness?  
If so, in what way does your Commission address School Readiness? Please explain:

- a. Identified as a community priority – projects are currently funded*
- b. Identified as a community priority – projects are currently not funded*
- c. Planned for next fiscal/program year*
- d. Not included in current strategic plan*
- e. Other*

- 6) Has the CCFC's identification of School Readiness as an overarching goal for statewide Prop.10 work changed the priority of School Readiness as part of your County Commission's strategic plan?

Yes            No

Please Explain:

- 7) Are there existing collaborative groups among early care and education providers/agencies, school districts, county offices of education, and other county agencies working on School Readiness?

Yes                      No

-If 'yes,' what is the County Commission's relationship with this collaborative group(s)?

-Who/what agencies participate in the collaborative(s)?

-How successful has the partnership been?

-What have been some of the challenges/issues in developing this partnership?

-Is there a leader/catalyst for this School Readiness collaborative(s)? If so, who?

- 8) What community strengths/resources are available to support a School Readiness initiative?

- 9) What community needs have been identified that reinforce the importance of a School Readiness focus?

- 10) Does your County Commission have a "model" for School Readiness?

Yes                      No



-If yes, please describe the governance structure of the model. In other words, who provides the oversight and administration of the model?

-Please send any available written description of your model.

- 11) Does the County Commission's School Readiness model have a county-wide, district-wide, or school level scope?
- 12) How many schools (and/or school districts) are included?
- 13) If your County Commission does not have a "model" for School Readiness but is funding (considering funding) related projects, what elements are/will be included?
- 14) Do you consider your 'model' to be a pilot project for possible expansion?  
Yes                      No

-If yes, what are your criteria for determining success?

- 15) When and how will the County Commission evaluate this "model"?
- 16) If the pilot is successful, what are your County Commission's future plans?
- 17) What challenges and opportunities do you see for School Readiness in your county?
  - a. Please describe challenges
  - b. Please describe opportunities
- 18) How can the CCFC and partner agencies support your efforts for School Readiness program development? Please identify the relative importance of the following areas for 'school readiness' program development and technical assistance. Prioritize the below listed areas on a 1-4 scale.

**1= very important**

**2= important**

**3=moderately important**

**4=not very important**

- 19) Information on “school readiness”
- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Children’s readiness for School                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. Family and community supports that focus on ‘school readiness’ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. School’s “readiness” for children                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
- 20) Assistance with updating/focusing your County’s Prop.10 strategic plan.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 21) Examples and assistance with integrating schools and community/family resource centers as platforms for school readiness initiatives.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 22) Assistance in building partnerships to facilitate systems change and integrated service delivery; encouraging community service providers and school systems to work together to successfully implement a school readiness initiative.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 23) Leadership development strategies.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 24) Communications/marketing tools to engage community providers, childcare providers, school leadership, policymakers, and the general public.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 25) Finance tools to leverage Prop 10 and other potential resources, expertise, and funds (e.g., schools, WIC) to support local efforts.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 26) Long-term funding sustainability models.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 27) Best practice models based on research.
- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
- 28) On-going information on the ‘school readiness’ work in other counties.

- |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29) On-going communication/coordination on 'school readiness' work in your region.  |   |   |   |   |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30) Information provided by a yearly inventory of school districts on early childhood education and other school readiness efforts.   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31) Accountability and evaluation methods that could be used to monitor your initiative's progress.                                   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32) Provide consultants and local experts.  |   |   |   |   |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33) Any other areas of support, please specify.   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34) Preferred methods for receiving 'school readiness' technical assistance:  |   |   |   |   |
| a. Email  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. Teleconferences  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. Workshops  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. Regional meetings  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e. Site visits  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f. Other  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35) Any other information you would like to share regarding your county commission's school readiness efforts?                        |   |   |   |   |
| 36) Would your County Commission be willing to participate in a possible site visit to gather more information about your initiative? |   |   |   |   |
| YES   |   |   |   |   |
| NO  |   |   |   |   |

## APPENDIX B

<b>School Readiness Work in Other Counties</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	25	45%
Important	24	44%
Moderately Important	7	13%
Not very Important	0	0%

<b>School Readiness Activities in Your Region</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	25	45%
Important	22	40%
Moderately Important	8	14%
Not very Important	1	2%

<b>Consultants and Local Experts</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	25	45%
Important	21	38%
Moderately Important	6	11%
Not very Important	2	4%

<b>A Yearly Inventory of School Districts on Early Childhood and School Readiness</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	21	38%
Important	19	34%
Moderately Important	10	18%
Not very Important	6	11%

<b>Leadership Development</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	18	32%
Important	19	34%
Moderately Important	9	16%
Not very Important	10	18%

<b>Strategic Plan Assistance</b>		
<b>Level of Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Important	9	16%
Important	13	23%
Moderately Important	12	21%
Not very Important	22	39%

Seventeen Commissions listed other areas in which technical assistance would be valuable. These areas are:

- Better definition and clarity of School Readiness
- Facility development
- Contracting with faith-based organizations
- Funding for developing infrastructure
- Getting districts to see themselves as partners with child care
- Geographic Information Systems training and information
- On-line access to information
- Guidance on how the initiative will be measured
- Increasing parent involvement
- Information on fitting into the “phase” process of the School Readiness initiative
- Information about rural counties
- Infrastructure and governance
- Additional funding
- Professional training
- Adult and family literacy
- Salesmanship
- Semi-annual report on what Counties are doing
- Help with accessing blending funding and other funding sources for rural counties
- Research concerning what the critical measures of school readiness are

## APPENDIX C

Eighteen County Commissions offered other methods of technical assistance that they would find valuable. These methods include:

- Call-in Technical Assistance Center
- Chat Rooms
- Website
- Consultants
- State Conferences
- A directors' association
- Field lessons
- Publications/Mailings
- On-site support
- Quick-shot concept papers
- Combination of email and regular mail
- State meetings to showcase good programs from Northern and Southern California
- Video conferences
- Faxes
- Set aside time at monthly meetings for TA